

A title logo for "Pillars of Eternity". The word "PILLARS" is at the top, "OF" is in the middle, and "ETERNITY" is at the bottom. The letters are gold-colored and set against a dark, jagged, teal-colored mountain range silhouette. Below the main title is a decorative gold-colored starburst.

PILLARS
OF
ETERNITY

GUIDEBOOK
VOLUME ONE





PILLARS OF ETERNITY





GUIDEBOOK

VOLUME ONE



DARK HORSE BOOKS

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We'd like to thank the entire *Pillars of Eternity* team for their hard work and dedication in making the world of Eora come to life. We'd also like to thank each and every one of our Kickstarter backers for the overwhelming support they've shown us during the development of the game. We could not have come this far without their generosity and encouragement.

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PILLARS OF ETERNITY GUIDEBOOK VOLUME ONE

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CHAPTER I FOREWORD



WHEN WE LAUNCHED OUR KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN IN SEPTEMBER of 2012, we had modest hopes that we would hit our target goal of \$1.1 million in the following month. To say we were unprepared for the immediate outpouring of enthusiasm and encouragement would be an understatement. In the final tally of our month-long march, over 77,000 fans backed our campaign, then simply called Project Eternity. Like the project itself, no foreword to this book could begin without first thanking all of you for the tremendous support you have given us.

With that support came the responsibility to create both a game and a setting that lived up to the legacy of our spiritual forebears. We built the foundation for the world of Eora in the style of the classic fantasy settings of our youth. As we continued building, we knew that Eora could not simply be a facsimile of other worlds, but a living and changing place that inspires us to create engaging characters and challenging story lines for players to explore.

In *Pillars of Eternity*, we want to welcome you to a world in the midst of wondrous discoveries and all the changes they bring. The Eastern Reach is at the heart of technological and social revolutions that will shape Dyrwood, Readceras, Eir Glanfath, and the Vailian Republics in the decades and centuries to come. We want you to feel that you are a part of this world, one of the many forces that can push and pull the Eastern Reach from its tumultuous present into its promising future.

With that in mind, please take the contents of this book for what they are: snapshots of one corner of a world that is, like our own, ever in motion. We hope that you can help us illuminate the contents of many more volumes in the years to come.

Josh Sawyer
Project Director







CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO EORA

From the mysteries of fallen civilizations to the vagaries of soulcraft, Eora is a spawning pool of questions. A scholar from Dyrwood will throw caution to the wind as he or she tests the limits of his or her spiritual essence. With the same pull of ambition will a Vailian explorer plunder haunted ruins for gold. Across the world, a practical Aedyran archivist may hide or destroy some nugget of the occult. Only their motivation separates them from a shared objective: the inexhaustible search for truth and meaning, which represents Eora in ways that no map ever could. Time and culture may have shaped Eora's borders, piety may have strengthened them, and conflict may have shattered them, but all things sprout from a shared root in the vast unknown.

Overwhelming evidence suggests that Eora's physical realm is counterbalanced by a spiritual one. Some have awakened to the wisdom of past lives, recalling a place both parallel and intersecting with the known world. Others even claim to see its wayward spirit denizens, and attract lost souls like iron filings to a magnet. Although Eora's relationship to that place is debated, this much is known: all things will die and visit the Beyond. How they fare on the other side is another matter entirely. It is this unmapped nether realm that inspires the questions and ensuing conflicts that color the history of Eora.



A pantheon of gods oversees all matters earthly or spiritual. Though they seem to bicker for the admiration of mortals, their worshippers believe they warrant praise for keeping the cogs of existence in motion. Inasmuch as anyone can comprehend the divine, it is recognized that they keep a comfortable distance from Eora for as long as it suits them. Manifestation in the form of earthly avatars is a rare occurrence, but it has been known to accelerate or punctuate times of great struggle. Any member of the Dozens could speak at length about the terror of holy intervention, but even they would be hard pressed to deny the critical nature of the gods.

Eora's diverse races and cultures are ultimately the ones with the final say on its trajectory. Whether a forest-skulking orlan or an ocean-faring aumaua, all living peoples share an origin and destination. A growing school of animancers devotes its members' lives to unlocking godlike potential only dimly understood. Others would limit such activity under harsh restrictions, relying on piety and diplomacy to keep order in check. Both sides are equally invested in enduring the beautiful, hostile environment they've crafted for themselves.



OVERVIEW OF EORA'S HISTORY

All knowledge of what came before the tribal history of the kith (meaning all civilized races) is enmeshed in legend passed down by word of mouth. Echoes of the old ways survive in religious myth and some practices of soulcraft, but the volume of information lost or hidden may never be fully realized. Early records refer to the Aedyr, or "People of the Deer," a tribe of chieftain-led nomads who settled their continent in the West. Over the course of two thousand years, the Aedyr developed at a slow pace, fighting skirmishes with other cultures as often as forming mutually beneficial unions. Progress moved at such a pace that the Aedyr might have continued on that path for another

thousand years, but a chance encounter with the elves of Kulklin changed everything for the modest tribe.

Inclined toward maintaining a stable settlement, the kingdom of elves imparted their teachings of agriculture, architecture, and domestication to the folk in exchange for military protection. In time, the tribe recognized the benefits of a permanent union, and merged with the elves into the Kingdom of Aedyr. Most verifiable history begins during the early years of this union. Old legends and family tales made way for a new shared history, as if both cultures were invested in putting their pasts behind them and initiating a prosperous new future together.

Knowledge sharing between the two cultures brought about immediate advances in soulcraft. Though it was widely recognized that the souls of the living were capable of unlocking strange powers, fear of angering the gods usually suppressed any practice of animancy. Early experiments horrified the king and church enough to forbid animancy from all regions. Fearing any threat to their newfound stability, the Aedyran elves followed suit.

An era of security found the kingdom expanding its reach into new frontiers. The colony of Dyrwood attempted to settle the continent across the Great Eastern Ocean, which would come to be known as the Eastern Reach. This sparked the ire of Glanfathan natives who held the territory with spiritual reverence. The new empire's efforts were met with resistance, and reciprocated with intolerance that damaged any hope of kinship between developing nations. Cultural relations between the Aedyrans and the Glanfathan elves and orlans further disintegrated with the start of the Broken Stone War. The conflict was spurred by religious misunderstanding and the perceived desecration of sacred ruins. Broken Stone set the pattern of Aedyran diplomacy for subsequent generations.

The conflict came to a standstill when Aedyr grudgingly ceased their plunder of

ancient ruins in Eir Glanfath. In exchange, they retained Glanfathan prisoners of war in a growing culture of slavery. As tensions mounted between the two nations, conflict became inevitable, peace an unlikely dream, and the once-hopeful imperial colony a powder keg waiting to explode.

While the Aedyrans and Glanfathans fought amongst themselves, the Grand Empire of Vailia, older and grander than Aedyr, crumbled inward and lost control of its colonies across the sea. The local governments reemerged from internal struggle as the Vailian Republics, a loosely-connected confederacy of city-states. The collapse of Vailia's economy left a gap for Aedyran interests to invest their resources in the colony of Readceras, a pious community in the remote Ixamitl Plains. The new settlement represented a more stable opportunity for profit than battle-stricken Dyrwood.

In spite of this windfall, the local governments in Dyrwood poisoned relations with their neighbors by once again exploiting sacred ruins. This time, the Glanfathans struck back with unprecedented ferocity. A slave uprising threatened to expel all Aedyran presence with a decisive victory. Countering with scorched-earth tactics and renewed blood lust, the Dyrwoodan military burned sections of forest intended for Glanfathan retreat. The bloody, costly conflict came to be known as the War of Black Trees.

Over years to come, Dyrwood saw greater success when new leadership transformed the rebellious colony into a regulated palatinate and hub of commerce. The gradual abolition of slavery also served to alleviate regional tensions for the first time since the founding of the original settlement. Glanfathans opened trade routes and stopped actively protesting the expansion of the settlement. The local government also recognized the plundering of ancient ruins as illegal. Shifting diplomacy on both sides set the new standard for religious and political tolerance.

Imperial forces at Heomar disagreed with the directive, and secretly resumed their

exploitation of ancient ruins. The palatinate's leader eventually discovered the empire's infraction, and tracked its instigators to the highest level of government. Bridging the colony with allied Glanfathan forces under a shared banner, Dyrwood pushed against the emperor's imposition and launched the War of Defiance that would sever its ties to form an independent, self-governing nation. Peace

THE NIGHT WE CAMPED OUTSIDE OF Mercy Vale, I came upon our King sitting alone by the fire. I bent my knee across from him in silence. His eyes blazed like embers slipping through Hel. The rangers warned me that speaking with the divine could invite madness, but did I listen? For days had I marched in the rear flank. Now was my chance to converse with Eothas' own. In my head I recited the question: Why do we march on Dyrwood when there are so many ways to cast light from afar? What sin have they committed to deserve our wrath?

Before I could summon the courage to open my mouth, our King answered almost as if he was speaking to himself: "You need not celebrate our acts to know their righteousness."

Mercy Vale crumbled that morning. The last time I saw our King, he was no happier for his great work, but he shone for it all the same.

—The Collected Correspondences of the Bloody Pilgrimage

with the Glanfathans finally achieved lasting success, but the Aedyran Empire was left out of the equation.

Free from Aedyran imperial regulations, animancy in the Dyrwood resurged for the first time in over four hundred years. Experiments in the previously forbidden art resulted in accidental deaths on a small scale, but soured the notion of soulcraft to the rural populace. In order to avoid persecution, animancers willingly relocated to Defiance Bay, where they could research and experiment in the company of like-minded colleagues. There they founded the Brackenbury Sanitarium to research and treat ailments of the soul. An asylum and safehouse for the gifted, Brackenbury

stands unified against cultural superstition and small-mindedness, prioritizing ambition over morality.

While relative calm settled in the East, a new threat emerged from the far North. The empire's investment in Readceras failed, leaving the colony destitute. A religious order devoted to Eothas, the god of light, unseated the colonial government as a reprisal. They blamed a lack of piety on the region's downward turn. Led by Waidwen, a farmer turned spiritual zealot, the order invaded Dyrwood in a purging known as the Saint's War. Popular belief held that Waidwen was the living avatar of Eothas. In spite of the conflict's otherworldly source, the war ended a year later when priests and engineers at Halgot Citadel assassinated the "Divine King" with a device known as the Godhammer bomb. Sentiments toward Eothasians turned violent, and the surviving followers of Saint Waidwen retreated to their homeland, where they would reform their government as a penitential regency.

Shortly after the war, a startling development changed the relationship between the physical and spiritual realms. Children across Dyrwood were born without souls, most doomed to die in their cribs. As the affliction spread, rural justice and mob mentality cast blame wherever it could be found. Many saw this as divine punishment for crimes against faith. Those in a panic over "Waidwen's Legacy" sought the help of animancers in a break with historical precedence. In response to public desperation, and in spite of warnings from many in the animancy community, the souls of animals were transplanted into tens of thousands of newborn husks. To all outward appearances, the issue was resolved. Then the first of the affected children reached puberty. They transformed into inhuman monsters, or *wichts*, along with the thousands of other "saved" innocents.

Dyrwood's soulcraft renaissance quickly lost momentum, and animancers everywhere

felt the repercussions. The last practitioners still holding out in rural communities fled to Defiance Bay, or the Vailian Republics, to escape the unexpected shift in tensions. Every nation is plagued with uncertainty, and no one knows what part animancy will play in Eora's future.



CELESTIAL BODIES

The Moon—Beläfa

Senn Beläfa (*senn BEH-ləh-vah*, "The Beloved," *Eld Aedyran*)

Legend tells of Ondra, the goddess of the sea, who looked into the sky after the forging of the world. She fell in love with the pale orb hanging in the heavens, and struggles constantly to reach her distant beloved. The waves that crest off Ondra's back are her frustration, the storms her anger. Prior to a seafaring voyage, superstitious sailors have been known to kiss their wives with extra passion. The practice of "paying respects to Ondra" has neither been proven nor disproven as a viable source of good luck.

Eora's primary satellite is not of sufficient size to block the sun. Glanfathan tribes engage in a celebratory ritual whenever their region falls under the shadow of a partial eclipse.

The Dark Moon—Cawldha

Cawldha Dev (*CAHWL-thah DEHV*, "Black Runner," *Glanfathan*)

Three hundred and fifteen years ago, Glanfathan astronomers spotted a small satellite racing near the edge of Beläfa during an annular eclipse. This was also a time when the Grand Empire of Vailia and the Aedyran Empire recorded suffering from terrible storms and terrifyingly high and low tides. Similarly, several nascent colonies on the Dyrwoodan coast were destroyed by tides and storms that completely engulfed entire settlements.

The Glanfathans, and, later, Vailians, came to believe that it was caused by a small



satellite with an extremely irregular orbit which they called Cawldha Dev, or the "Black Runner." While the Cawldha does not seem to have a noticeable effect on the world normally, astronomers believe it can align with Beläfa's orbit and wreak havoc on tides and weather everywhere. These terrible events occur with erratic frequency and severity and are called "Lovers' Tides," again playing to the legends of Ondra. The last Lovers' Tide happened during the Dyrwoodan Revolution, and was predicted by the Glanfathans and used to the advantage of the Dyrwoodan defenders.

Aedyran kings of old went into superstitious retreat during the Lovers' Tides, and a special bedroom was established near the dungeons to accommodate royalty during celestial events. The practice eventually fell out of style, but maintaining the Moon Bed still falls under the duties of some stewards in traditional parts of Aedyr and Dyrwood.

♦ ♦ ♦

CALENDAR: ANNI IROCCIO (AI)

Named after the inventor who studied the motion of the stars, Iroccio's calendar replaced its less practical predecessors in 2680 AI. The Aedyran calendar was steeped in the traditions of its posttribal kingdom, and included days of reverence devoted to political stations long since rendered obsolete.

According to Iroccio's observations, Eora takes 334 days (of 27 hours each) to orbit the sun. He divided the sixteen months (of 20 days each) equally by their seasons. Whether or not it coincided with the Aedyran calendar, farms and smaller communities traditionally reserved three days for prayer and preparation between each season. Iroccio factored these days into his calendar, as well as those reserved for celebrating the beginning and midpoint of the year.

The names of the months and adjacent days of celebration are listed below with Vailian translations:

New Year

Deep Winter: Fonivérno (*fohn-ih-VEHR-no*)

Late Winter: Tarivérno (*tahr-ih-VEHR-no*)

Spring Dawn (three days): Inprima

Early Spring: Préprima

Mid-Spring: Majprima

Deep Spring: Fonprima

Late Spring: Tarprima

Summer Rising (three days): Inestu

Early Summer: Préëstu

Midsummer: Majestu

Midyear

Deep Summer: Fonestu

Late Summer: Tarestu

Autumn Falling (three days): Inauton

Early Autumn: Préauton

Mid-Autumn: Majauton

Deep Autumn: Fonauton

Late Autumn: Tarautton

Winter Dusk (three days):

Inivérno (ihn-ih-VEHR-no)

Early Winter: Préivérno (*pree-ih-VEHR-no*)

Midwinter: Majivérno (*mahzb-ih-VEHR-no*)

There are five days in each week, and four weeks per month. Despite using the Iocccian month names, Dyrwoodans and most people in the area (even Vailians) use the traditional Eld Aedyran day names:

Godandag (*GAH-dahn-dahg*,

contraction of "Gods' Day")

Cönyngsdag (*COE-neengs-dahg*,

contraction of "King's Day")

Mecwynsdag (*MEH-queens-dahg*,

contraction of "Illustrious Queen's

[Consort's] Day")

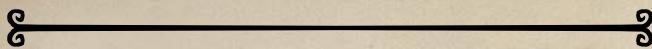
Folcsdag (*FOHLKS-dahg*,

contraction of "Peoples' Day")

Rytlingsdag (*REE-tlings-dahg*,

contraction of "Children's Day")





GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The advent of carrack-style expedition ships allowed for the transport of people and goods across wide swaths of otherwise unnavigable ocean. Eora's charted territories span a range of diversely inhabited continents. Few of the known regions within sailing distance are inhospitable to sentient life in one form or another.

Aedyr's equatorial territory in the far West vacillates between seasons of aridity and humidity. Major harbors are interrupted during seasons of coastal storm, but they never shut down entirely. Whether a colony is tasked with clearing an untamed jungle or fighting the turbulent sea, it has long been the policy of Aedyr to progress and expand with little regard for the local climate.

This practice paid off with increasing returns during the early years of settlement in Dyrwood. As the region is temperate with moderate rain and snowfall, its only areas of extreme weather are the colder miles inward and mountain regions. With the exception of the rare Lovers' Tides, most environmental hazards were avoidable during the occupation.

Seafaring expeditions heading south and east go no farther than the Deadfire Archipelago. The chain of active volcanoes poses less of a threat than the shifting landmasses and warm water that it fosters. In addition to being virtually unmapped and unpredictable, the low-visibility currents swarm with sea monsters that are rumored to constrict, splinter, and swallow vessels whole. Although boreal dwarves inhabiting Naasitaq regularly cross the distance between Deadfire and the Vailian Republic, even they regard the inaccessible East as a barrier from the gods.

The Rauatai Gulf northwest of the Ixamitl Plains is a famous tropical destination and home of the coastal aumaua. During temperate seasons, port cities play a central role in trade between foreign interests. A counterpoint to the welcome destination lies in the vast expanse of the Wending White to the south. Though not cold beyond habitation, the eastern Wend is primarily a destination for whalers seeking a challenge among the ice-littered waterways.







CHAPTER 3
THE GODS AND THE WHEEL



There is no debate over the existence of souls and the divine. The only questions are how these unseen forces interact with one another, and what mortals can do to achieve success in this life and the next.

GODS

The pantheon of Eora is separated from their mortal kin by the boundary of the Shroud. As the only beings purportedly able to cross between those neighboring realms, the gods take an active interest in affairs that impact broader issues, like piety or the state of an empire. Their influence in daily matters (such as weather or good fortune) is more the topic of myth and superstition, neither of which should be dismissed out of hand.

The gods are credited with the perfect order of the Wheel (see Berath's Wheel), and therefore maintain Eora's balance on both the physical and spiritual realms.

High priests to the various faiths keep regular contact with their patron deities through prayer and rituals of devotion. History has demonstrated that the gods are capable of visiting the mortal realm in the form of chosen spectral aspects or corporeal avatars. The former embodiment is used for ease of communication with a cleric or prophet, while the latter is reserved for taking a hand in high-stakes conflicts.

This degree of proximity allows that the character and disposition of the gods are abundantly knowable.

Berath | (BEAR-*ath*)

- **ALIASES:** "The Twinned God," "Cirono" (Vailian), "Bewnen i Ankew" / "Ankew i Bewnen" (Glanfathan), "The Pallid Knight," "The Usher"
- **PORTFOLIO:** Cycles, doorways, portals, mortality, death, inevitability
- **ALLIES:** Rymgand (possibly)
- **FOES:** None
- **SYMBOLS:** A keyhole, a jawless skull, or a skull incorporated into a doorway or keyhole

Called *Berath* in Aedyran and *Cirono* in Vailian, it is the god of cycles, of doors, and of life and death itself. People commonly place or carve

the figure of Berath in doorways, windows, and other "portals" from one place to another, figurative or literal. People commonly refer to Berath using neutral pronouns like "it," though specific manifestations (e.g., the Pallid Knight, who appears female) are often gendered.

In Eir Glanfath's ruins, explorers have discovered two common figures, Bewnen i Ankew and Ankew i Bewnen ("Life in Death" and "Death in Life," respectively), semiskeletal female and male figures who occupy positions opposite each other in doorways—like a twinned display of the split aspects of Berath/Cirono.

Berath has a relatively small priesthood, in part because it does not speak often to its members. However, Berath has many, many petitioners and occasional followers.

The Pallid Knight is a manifestation of Berath that has appeared in legends for at least three centuries. In these legends, someone escapes or otherwise cheats death and encounters (or is pursued by) a gaunt female knight in black armor with black hair and eyes and "milk-pale" skin. The knight demands an impossible-to-pay toll for traveling on her lord's road for too long. The implication is always that the person has overstayed their welcome in the mortal world and it is time for them to move on. Sometimes the person surrenders to the knight, sometimes they attack the knight and wind up killing themselves in the process, and sometimes they flee from the knight and stumble into the Usher.

The Usher is a very old manifestation of Berath. In stories, he often appears much more obviously supernatural than the Pallid Knight, with skeletal features or simply as a walking skeleton. The Usher is typically human, but occasionally appears as a dwarf. Unlike the Pallid Knight, the Usher never speaks, but simply creates a circumstance for the unwitting and unwilling to march to their doom (sometimes directly into their own grave).

Sometimes these manifestations appear alone, but often they are paired, with the Pallid Knight "blocking" the way and the Usher



opening the door to the afterlife. The Pallid Knight is a more martial and confrontational figure (in part because she also speaks), while the Usher is more subdued, inviting, and occasionally deceptive.

Ondra | (AHN-drah)

- ALIASES: "The Lady of Lament," "Salty Wench" (vulgar/cheeky), "The Seavault"
- PORTFOLIO: Oceans, seas, forgotten places and things, loss, mourning, the tide, relentlessness
- ALLIES: None
- FOES: None

• SYMBOLS: Cresting waves under a crescent moon

Ondra is a melancholy and mournful goddess who, legends say, was once in love with the moon. She is the ruler of all seas and oceans, and is venerated by sailors, fishermen, those who live near the shore, and those who mourn loss—especially lost love.

Legends of Ondra are old compared to many legends of other gods. Stories of her romance with the moons can be found in several cultures around the world. In these stories, Ondra falls in love with the moon, but is ignored. She pursues the moon and attempts to touch it, causing part of it to fall into her, losing its glow as it descends into her depths. The event causes horrible catastrophes all over the world. Despite this, legends say Ondra still continues to pursue her love. People believe that the tides are her perpetual pursuit of the remaining moon. Tidal waves, tsunamis, and similar catastrophes are the results of her more aggressive attempts.

In legends, Ondra is one of the few deities that do not take a physical form. In rare cases where she exerts her influence, it is felt through the water or its inhabitants. She is also never known to speak. She is popularly imagined as a goddess who listens and accepts

without judgment or reply. As such, many use her (via the ocean or the sea) as a confessional for feelings they cannot otherwise express. People also drop objects into the ocean or sea (including bodies—others' or their own) to forget about them, believing that Ondra will hold them in the darkness with her piece of the moon.

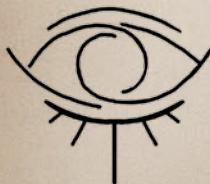
Ondra's Giftbearers are groups of men and women who collect donations of trinkets, love notes, and other objects from people who live far inland in exchange for a small fee. The Giftbearers take these objects to the ocean or sea and ceremonially drop them in a particularly deep spot. There have been historical cases of Giftbearers (or people posing as them) abusing their responsibility, either by pawning the gifts they are given or by reading the contents of notes and diaries people give them and using them for blackmailing purposes. As a result, in some areas, Giftbearers are mistrusted or even attacked by suspicious locals.

Ondra's Hair are long, slowly shifting pillars of water that rise up from the surface of oceans and seas. They are the most direct physical manifestation of Ondra anyone has ever recorded, capable of gesturing, manipulating objects in the environment, and even attacking with blinding speed and terrible power. Legends state that Ondra's Hair manifests to thwart or punish plunderers of the deep sea.

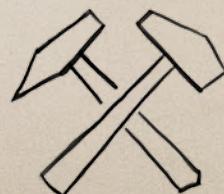
Rymrgand | (REE-mear-gahnd)

- ALIASES: "The Beast of Winter"
- PORTFOLIO: Cold, winter, famine, entropy, natural disasters, bad luck, the collapse of nations and empires
- ALLIES: None
- FOES: None

• SYMBOLS: The horned skull of an aurochs



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ONDRA

Much like Ondra and Berath, Rymrgand seems to be a more ancient, primal sort of deity. Depictions of it—or a god very much like it—appear in some of the oldest Glanfathan ruins and therefore predate present-day civilization.

The Beast of Winter takes the form of a massive, shaggy aurochs, its albino fur thickly encrusted with frost and snow. Reports of the creature's height vary, though it is commonly said to be over thirty feet tall, and sometimes much taller. Despite its size, it is often described as an emaciated creature, as though it hasn't eaten in days or weeks.

All the reported sightings agree that Rymrgand maintains a constant pace, never pausing or faltering. Its appearance is often heralded by a deep, droning call that echoes for miles around. Wherever the Beast steps, all life dies. No form of life is immune to Rymrgand's power, and even the gods are said to flee its passage. Rymrgand is also accompanied by a bitter cold that grows worse as it draws near, and the god itself is often obscured by driving snow and ice.

Witnesses—those lucky enough to get close to Rymrgand and survive—also report seeing figures hiding amid the thick fur of its underside. These are believed to be the souls of those who ventured too near to the Beast. Their mortal bodies were frozen and are long since gone, but their souls cling to the god's bushy coat, desperately seeking shelter from the cold. The dwarves of the boreal South have stories of heroes who tried to save the souls of their loved ones from this fate, though such stories typically have tragic ends.

Some believe that Rymrgand follows a migratory path from south to north, bringing winter cold from the polar region as it makes its way north, and then allowing the warmth

of spring to return when it heads south once more. The discovery of a similar polar region in the far North—as well as reports of the Beast of Winter among peoples there—has cast doubt upon these ancient superstitions . . . though it is possible that Rymrgand has multiple manifestations.

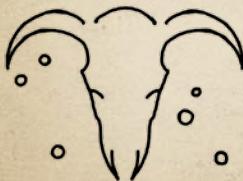
Sightings and visions of the Beast are thought to be portents of bad luck or impending doom, often appearing in the dreams of leaders before disaster strikes their people. The aurochs's skull is a near-universal symbol of doom.

Berath and Rymrgand share a complicated relationship within the divine pantheon. Though both figures lord over death, Berath is viewed as having dominion over death's cycle, while Rymrgand is the master of entropy. Some theologians believe Rymrgand would prefer the cycle dismantled, the souls who take part in it disintegrated. This oppositional standpoint is reflected in Rymrgand's worshipers, who view their resurrections as punishments instead of blessings.

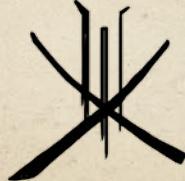
Woedica | (WÖ-dib-kuh)

- ALIASES: "The Exiled Queen," "The Burned Queen," "The Queen That Was," "Oathbinder," "The Strangler"
- PORTFOLIO: Law, justice, oaths and promises, (rightful) rulership, hierarchies, memory, vengeance
- ALLIES: Skaen, though the true nature of their relationship is uncertain
- FOES: Everyone (she believes that all the gods owe her fealty)
- SYMBOLS: A broken throne, a leather-bound book of law partially blackened by fire

A dethroned old noblewoman, often shown wandering the open road in tattered finery, Woedica is usually depicted with burned and withered skin, having been cast from



RYMRGAND



SKAEN



MAGRAN



GALAWAIN



WOEDICA



BERATH

her rightful seat by war and burned in Magran's fire . . . though she always keeps her dignity and plots her (rightful) revenge. Some stories suggest that she may once have claimed rulership over some or all of the gods, but if this is true, then she was cast down in the far distant past.

Priestesses of the Exiled Queen serve as lawyers and judges in towns and urban centers, and the most prominent among them are advisers to kings and lords. They are of particular importance in the Aedyran Empire, where by tradition, business contracts always require their endorsement. Her devotees are typically found in the upper classes, but any conservative person who longs for a vanished past will find a place in her faith. "When Woedica takes back her throne" is a common saying among her followers, signifying a utopian future when society will be properly ordered once again, and she will take her rightful place as ruler of the gods.

Woedican clergy typically rely on local authorities to enforce the law. However, they maintain a loose association with a much-feared order of Woedican paladins, known as the Steel Garrote, who partner with powerful individuals and business interests to hunt down those who violate contracts (especially if they are endorsed by the Woedican Church). The Steel Garrote is active throughout the Aedyran Empire (where it was founded) and its former colonies, and the Vailian Republics.

The Exiled Queen's memory is flawless—she remembers every transgression, every slight. People say a quick prayer to her when they want to remember something they've forgotten.

Woedica's only known manifestation is the Strangler, a leathery-skinned old woman, always clad in tattered finery, who appears on an empty road or abandoned alleyway to murder those who break a solemn oath. According to the few witnesses who claim to have seen her, the Strangler is supernaturally agile and quick, and all the reports agree that she wears a wild grin as she pursues her quarry. The Strangler's wiry form hides a formidable



strength—she can throttle a grown aumaua with her bare hands. In some cases, multiple Stranglers have been seen at once, if their target proves especially difficult. Woedica's avatar is believed to have slain several famous usurpers in Dyrwoodan history, though it is possible that the real murderers merely blamed the goddess. Also for this reason, (serious) oath breaking is punished by strangulation in many cultures.

Eothas | (AY-uh-thahss)

- **ALIASES:** "The Child of Light," "The Dawnstars," "Gaun"
- **PORTFOLIO:** Light, dawn, birth, spring, rebirth, redemption
- **ALLIES:** Hylea, Woedica
- **FOES:** Magran
- **SYMBOLS:** A rising sun with radiant rays, a sun rising from a starry field

The Aedyran name for the god of light and redemption, Eothas is often represented as a young man holding a candle and wearing a crown of shining silver or as his messengers, the Dawnstars. Influence over the sun and stars contributes to his overall air of grandeur and importance, putting Eothas at odds with the rest of the pantheon. By divine command, his churches are strictly regulated in their laws of the faith. A candle, lantern, or torch must burn in the center of every room, banishing "shadows of unfaithful" to vacant doorways (Berath's realm). Doves are traditionally housed in towering rookeries, and crows hunted for miles around.

While worship of Eothas is still popular in the Aedyran Empire and Readceras, the faith is outlawed or at least actively hated by the populace in most cities of Dyrwood due to events of the Saint's War that culminated at Halgot Citadel. Though Eothas once communicated regularly with his faithful, he has not done so since the destruction of Saint Waidwen at the Battle of Godhammer fifteen years ago.

Saint Waidwen (a.k.a. Divine King Waidwen or the Martyr King) was a vorlas (purple-dye-producing plant) farmer living

in a remote part of the colony of Readceras. According to legends, one night, spiritual manifestations of Eothas, the Dawnstars, appeared to the young farmer and told him to punish the Aedyran governor for leading the people to ruin. Waidwen went to his village and told people what he had seen and heard. Initially ignored and later attacked for his beliefs, Waidwen began manifesting miraculous powers. This drew devoted believers from all over his county and eventually fomented a popular revolt.

Waidwen, assisted by some knights and nobles who believed in his cause, eventually marched on the capital city and confronted the imperial governor. The governor was not killed, but was forced to abdicate power and leave the colony. Upon entering the seat of imperial power, Waidwen's body physically transformed into something otherworldly. According to most records from the era, his flesh appeared to become luminescent and his head completely transformed into pure (sometimes literally blinding) light.

Stories say that people asked Waidwen to lead the colony and that he accepted, becoming the first and only "Divine King" of Readceras. As king, his rule was virtually uncontested. He immediately punished allies of the empire and what he believed were corrupt churches and church leaders of Eothas. It was not long before worshipers of Eothas were punished for perceptions of heresy and nonworshipers were punished for following other faiths. When Readceran citizens fled to Dyrwood for sanctuary, it caused strife between the two nations that eventually led to the Saint's War.

During the conflict, Waidwen personally led many battles and exhibited extraordinary supernatural powers. Accounts describe him as being virtually untouchable and rumored that he was indestructible, possibly a full manifestation of Eothas's power in the world. He was able to burn or even fully disintegrate enemies with beams of pure light.

It was not until the Battle of Halgot Citadel that he was significantly wounded. On that



occasion, he was more than wounded: he was fully destroyed. The Dyrwoodans had constructed and placed a massive bomb inside the stonework of an ancient bridge (Evon Dewr Bridge) leading to the citadel gates. They also warned and swore to the Readcerans that Waidwen could never cross the bridge, trusting that his ultimate confidence would lead him directly over it. This was exactly what happened, and the resulting explosion apparently destroyed Waidwen, half a regiment of Readceran knights, and about a dozen Dyrwoodans who sacrificed themselves to stall the saint on the bridge.

The Dawnstars are another manifestation of Eothas, which most people agree have not been seen since they visited Waidwen. According to stories, the Dawnstars appear as the ethereal forms of a man and two women who represent three of the brightest stars in the sky, often the last three to remain visible before the sun rises. They act as heralds of things to come, or as heralds of things Eothas wants to come, and as advisers to mortals at critical junctures.

Eothas has a final, more intimidating aspect in the form of Gaun—a farmer depicted as carrying a lantern and sickle. Gaun is a figure of dignified, cyclical death as opposed to Rymrgand's entropic variety or Berath's cold inevitability. In context, his presence surrounds the harvest, rebirth, spring, and the general celebration of mortality. His implements are symbolically important: the sickle reaps what is sowed in life, and the lantern guides the deceased down their intended paths of death and rebirth. It is generally believed that Gaun, instead of Berath's avatars, visits those who embrace death with acceptance and understanding.

Gaun still fits with Eothas's character as a bringer of light, but incorporates a sense of relentlessness that proves more disconcerting than hopeful. The weak and the underprivileged—while not necessarily under Gaun's protection—are nevertheless under his scrutiny in case anyone should seek to do them harm. Gaun is an answerer of wrongs and

imbalances, or whatever he interprets as imbalance. This has contributed in no small part to Dyrwood's enthusiasm for vigilante justice. Popular regard for Gaun is polarizing: he is appreciated and feared, and exudes a grim sense of finality.

The Night Market is a secret society of extraordinarily devoted Eothasians who operate in Dyrwood. In addition to ministering to the needs of ordinary Eothasians who cannot worship publicly, the Night Market attempts to track and fight against any dark forces that would threaten Dyrwood. Their hope is that they can mend the relationship between Dyrwoodans and Eothas by performing heroic, patriotic acts for the benefit of all residents of Dyrwood. However, some members of the Night Market wish to transform the purpose of the group into something quite different: an anti-Dyrwood organization seeking revenge for the Battle of Halgot Citadel.

Galawain | (GAH-lah-wayn)

- ALIASES: "The Seeker God," "The Clever Hound," "Lord of the Hunt," "Father of Monsters," "The Changeling"

- PORTFOLIO: Pursuit, discovery, perseverance, the hunt, assassins, predatory beasts, wilderness

- ALLIES: Unlike the other gods, Galawain seems to acknowledge Woedica's authority, even if he does not openly follow her commands. He maintains an uneasy friendship with Magran, as both gods respect trials and adversity.

- FOES: None

- SYMBOLS: A dog's head, usually made of ivory or bone

Galawain is patron of the hunt in all its forms, and he is honored by those whose occupations are concerned with pursuit and discovery. His faithful include frontiersmen, constables, treasure seekers, explorers, and even scholars, many of whom wear his carved symbol—a dog's head—around their wrist or neck. He is also protector of wild places and untamed wilderness, where the hunt manifests in its purest form as a daily struggle for survival.

Perseverance and cleverness are prized by Galawain above brute strength. He particularly



delights in turnabout—the transformation of prey into predator, or any sort of reversal where the weak gains an advantage over the strong.

Animals that assist mortals in the hunt (e.g., dogs, falcons) are particularly sacred to the Seeker God, and slaying or abusing them is thought to draw his ire. In stories, his punishment is often meted out by transformation into a prey species, with the offender left to the mercy of the very animals that he formerly abused.

In the mortal world, Galawain often manifests as a wolf or dog, though he may also appear as the Changeling, a broad-shouldered man with shaggy hair and beard, nut-brown skin, and some animal traits (e.g., pointed, hairy ears like an orlan's and sharp canine teeth). As the Changeling, he is almost always accompanied by his pack—a fearsome assortment of predatory beasts.

Legends suggest that Galawain once served as a divine enforcer, destroying those who defied the gods. Such stories seem to date from the vanished era when Woedica ruled the other gods, for it is often she who commands the Seeker to destroy a hapless individual...or in some cases, an entire mortal city. Though he has not served in this role for centuries, many believe that he would do so again if the need arose, and mortal assassins still consider him to be their divine patron.

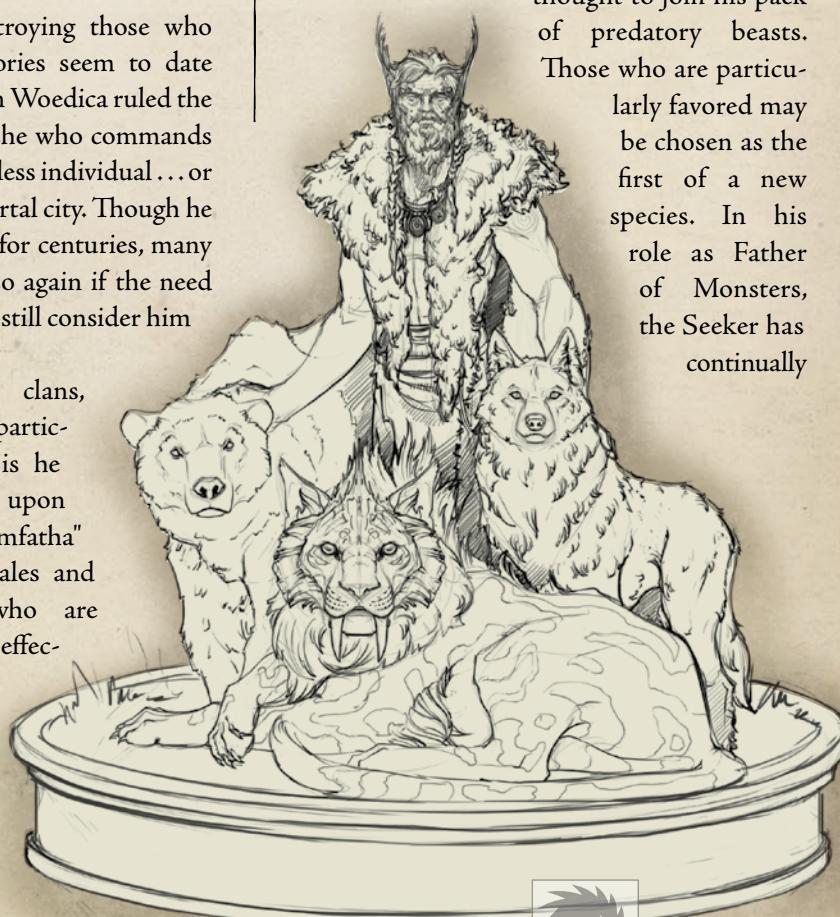
For some Glanfathan clans, the Seeker God has a particularly important role. It is he who confers legitimacy upon their leadership ("anamfatha" and "anamenfatha" for males and females, respectively), who are expected to be cunning and effective leaders of the hunt.

When an anamfath is dying, he is carried into the deep forest and left there, to be claimed by the Seeker God. If the Seeker

deems an anamfath worthy, the Glanfathans believe that he will leave the corpse intact, carrying off the chief's soul to join his pack. If not, the Seeker's hounds will tear apart the chief's body, and his soul will be forced to find its own way to the afterlife. In such cases, that chief's name is struck from the oral records of the clan, and he is quickly forgotten.

A similar tradition has arisen among devotees of Galawain from other cultures. Frontiersmen who have followed the Seeker for most of their lives, and who have proven themselves to be worthy hunters, will often wander into the woods when they feel death approaching, hoping that their souls will be accepted by their divine patron. Explorers have reported finding the desiccated corpses of woodsmen that have apparently lain in the wilderness for weeks or months yet remained untouched by animals, lending some credence to these beliefs.

Souls that are accepted by the Seeker are thought to join his pack of predatory beasts. Those who are particularly favored may be chosen as the first of a new species. In his role as Father of Monsters, the Seeker has continually



WHENEVER I PULL SMELTED IRON FROM the furnace, it hisses at me with an appreciative "yesss." I don't know if Abydon praises my craft, if Magran praises my results, or if I've simply spent too many years hunched over the glowing forge. No matter. The gods are welcome to my work for as long as I can swing a hammer. My husband, who finds virtue in tending crops, criticizes me for forging implements of death. I'd like to see how he enjoys plowing a field with his bare hands.

—Journal of Amfryda Oresplitter, master blacksmith

fashioned new "races" of predatory creatures that dwell in the deep wilderness. These creatures are always clever hunters—each more dangerous than the last—and their characteristics are inspired by the mortal follower who is selected as the first of their kind.

Magran | (MAH-grahn)

- ALIASES: None
- PORTFOLIO: War, fire, consumption, transformation, purification, trials
- ALLIES: Abydon, Galawain
- FOES: Eothas, Hylea
- SYMBOLS: A flame, a flaming spherical bomb

Magran is the Aedyran name for a goddess of war and fire. Magran's priests commonly employ firearms, and rumors among Eothasian clergy support that they even helped construct the Godhammer bomb used to destroy Saint Waidwen. Following the Saint's War, Magran became the most popular deity in Dyrwood. In Aedyr, her symbol is a flame, but in Dyrwood, it is a flaming bomb. Worship of Magran is extensively persecuted in Readceras.

Magran's faithful are rank-and-file soldiers as well as officers, tacticians, and strategists. Devices used in warfare, especially those made in the forge, such as weapons and armor, are also part of Magran's domain, and Abydon is often an important ally for her. Her priests view battle and warfare as inevitable human activities that should be pursued with single-minded efficiency. Consequently, she is not a goddess of battle lust or celebration as much as military excellence and passionate discipline.

More philosophically, priests of Magran view warfare as the apotheosis of mortal struggle—not something that should be undertaken at all times, but when undertaken, an endeavor that elevates mortals into a state of divine awareness. Lesser forms of adversity (physical or otherwise) are also celebrated by the church of Magran as trials that transform (for the better) mortal and spiritual lives.

Hylea | (high-LEE-UH)

- ALIASES: "Sky-Mother," "Queen of Birds"
- PORTFOLIO: The sky, birds, maternity, creativity, language, song, invention, the arts
- ALLIES: Eothas
- FOES: Magran (a relatively new development)
- SYMBOL: A sky-blue bird's egg

From her heavenly Court of Birds, Hylea sees all that passes on the earth below, and she commands the allegiance—or at least the respect—of every living creature that takes to the air. She wraps herself in a mantle of many colors, made from the feathers of every species of bird that has ever been seen. Hylean priests undertake expeditions into the wild to discover new species of birds and expand the power of their goddess. Her Court of Birds is a lively place, often depicted in art and song, full of sound and color and invention.

Hylea has never been known to appear in human form, but she is thought to be manifest in birds of all kinds, who serve as her eyes and ears in the mortal world. The greater the number of birds that are present in a particular place, the greater the likelihood that the Sky-Mother is watching.

She may also manifest in the cries of a woman in childbirth. When a mother dies to bring new life into the world, it is thought that her soul is carried directly to Hylea's court and transformed into one of her avian attendants. Children whose mothers died at birth are believed to be sacred to the Queen of Birds, since (according to stories) their mothers have her ear and she watches over them throughout their lives.

Hylea has both a formal and an informal clergy. Her official temples are aviaries, usually with many windows and skylights, sometimes with ceilings of glass, and filled with local birds

of every kind. They often double as artists' and writers' salons, with the creative classes among her most fervent devotees. Her informal clergy are midwives, scattered across the countryside, who are trained in the medical arts and deliver children in their goddess's name. They have no temples to speak of, but they will always wear a fetish or charm of colorful feathers—a sign that they have been trained by their predecessors and blessed by the goddess.

Before the destruction of Saint Waidwen at Godhammer Citadel, Hylea was an ally and friend of Eothas, since both gods had a hand in birth and new beginnings. Her priesthood mourns his disappearance on the anniversary of Saint Waidwen's "death" and commissions plays and poems in his honor. They are also rumored to have accepted a number of Eothasian clergy into their own ranks, in an effort to save them from the vengeful followers of Magran. This has somewhat dampened the Queen of Birds' faith in Dyrwood and raised tensions between her and Magran.

Artists and poets often keep birds in their homes, hoping that the goddess will whisper to them in their sleep. Among the wild orlans, though, creative inspiration is seen not as a gift but as something to be stolen from the goddess. Their poets and singers organize hunts in the deep forest, seeking the rarest and most colorful birds, which are then slain and eaten. To eat of the goddess's flesh is the only way to capture her divine creative spark, in their view. Accordingly, the Sky-Mother has no clergy among the wild orlans, and childbirth is said to be particularly painful and difficult for their kind.

Abydon | (AH-bee-don)

- **ALIASES:** "The Iron Arm," "The Smith of Magran," "The Golem"

- **PORTFOLIO:** Industry, machines, golems, smiths, skilled trades, strength, metals and mining, apprenticeship, hope, aspiration

- **ALLIES:** Magran

- **FOES:** Skaen

- **SYMBOLS:** A circular, toothed gear with a hammer imposed on top

According to ancient tradition, Abydon was once a god like most of the others, capable of taking human form. Then he was slain—by one of the other gods, according to some stories—though the reason has been forgotten with time. For some period afterward, Abydon was thought to have been destroyed. His immortal essence lingered, eventually taking shape and fashioning a new, artificial body for itself, piece by piece. Finally, Abydon returned to "life," somewhat diminished in power. With Magran's help, he claimed a new portfolio, becoming patron of industry, machines, and skilled labor. Centuries later, Abydon remains loyal to Magran, forging weapons for her campaigns and often appearing at her side in depictions of the war goddess.

Though he is associated with industry and progress, Abydon is never viewed as a source of inspiration or invention, which are the domain of Hylea. Instead, he is seen as the unfailing hand that enacts the designs of others, like his patron, Magran, and he is identified with the great masses of craftsmen and skilled tradesmen whose labor raises cities and shapes metals and gemstones from the depths of the earth.

To many in the working classes, Abydon is a comforting god, demanding nothing of his followers beyond a hard day's work and forthright service to their employers, customers, and lords. He is also an aspirational deity, representing hope for a better future by honest labor instead of plots or machinations. He encourages his followers to remake themselves by learning new skills and trades, just as he "remade" himself in his new artificial form. All of his clergy are expected to master a practical skill such as smithing or carpentry, and to teach that skill to those who are eager to learn. As such, Abydon has become quite popular, despite his unusual form.

In the intrigues of the gods, Abydon takes little part, though he serves Magran loyally and always takes her side against her enemies. Skaen hates Abydon, who represents exactly the sort of passive surrender to authority that the Quiet Slave despises.



Skaen | (SKAYN)

- ALIASES: "The Quiet Slave," "The Queen's Slave," "The Schemer," "The Effigy"
- PORTFOLIO: Defiance, secret hatred, covert plots, resentment, envy, violent rebellion
- ALLIES: Woedica (possibly)
- FOES: Abydon
- SYMBOL: The Quiet Slave has no official clergy or temples, and his worship is conducted in secret. His symbol is usually a small human effigy crafted from simple materials like sticks or clay, but always with shards of flint or another black stone for eyes. In other cases, his symbol may be a partially decayed animal (or small human/humanoid) corpse with the eyes replaced by black stones.

Skaen is usually depicted as a small, bald man whose body is completely covered in scars from a lash, and whose ears and nose have been cut off. He appears outwardly humble and submissive, with downcast eyes. A closer look reveals that his eyes are glittering and black, seething with a quiet hatred, and that one of his fists is clenched.

Those who plot the destruction of their superiors while keeping an impassive face will whisper a prayer to the Quiet Slave. Political rebels also call upon him for justice, in the hope that he will intercede on their behalf with Woedica, with whom he is associated. However, Skaen is an unforgiving deity. If a supplicant tips his hand or acts too rashly, the god will abandon them. The same goes for those who actually achieve their ambitions and rise to a higher station—they can no longer count on Skaen for aid.

Illustrations of Woedica often include the Quiet Slave. He accompanies her along the road, walking a few steps behind, carrying her burdens. It isn't clear if the two deities are true allies or if Skaen is merely following Woedica because she has lost her seat of power and plots the downfall of the other gods. Some theologians believe that Woedica stole the portfolio of vengeance from the Quiet Slave, and he follows her until he can find a way to take it back.

Skaen manifests as the Effigy, a horrific creature that is called into being by those who

are truly oppressed and willing to commit unspeakable acts to set themselves free. Worshipers must choose one of their number to serve as the Effigy, shaving this person's hair and removing all signs and symbols of gender or identity. The person is then scourged bloody over every inch of their body, their ears and nose cut off, their eyes gouged out and replaced with shiny black stones. Finally, they are made to drink the "privileged blood" of a person of wealth or high birth. This blood must be fresh, and the Effigy must consume every drop. Then, if the offering is accepted by the god (which it often is not), Skaen will manifest in the Effigy, becoming an utterly unstoppable and pitiless vessel of the god's power, immune to pain and imbued with monstrous strength. As soon as the target oppressors are slain (usually in a gruesome manner), the Effigy falls dead. True appearances of the Effigy are rare. In the most recent case, about a century before the present day, an Effigy reportedly led a backwoods peasant rebellion during which an entire noble family was captured, flayed alive, and nailed to the roof of its estate to be devoured by birds and flies.

Understandably, the Slave's worship is forbidden in some nations—particularly those with large populations of impoverished peasants or serfs. In the Vailian Republics, he appears as the Docile Slave—a highly sanitized depiction that is despised (and frequently defaced) by the lower classes.

In Dyrwood, Skaen's faithful often double as torturers and executioners, specializing in the interrogation of high-status prisoners and delighting in their downfall. There are a great many psychotics in their ranks, whose "eccentricities" are tolerated—even encouraged—as long as they follow orders and do their jobs. That Skaen is worshiped at all is considered one of the more disturbing characteristics of Dyrwoodan culture, but the basis for it is well grounded in history. A loose-knit community of Glanfathan practitioners grew in power after the Broken Stone War made slaves of their warriors. The small following

broadened in scope as a reaction to the War of Defiance. Several Effigies were secretly attempted in hopes of ending the conflict with the Aedyran Empire. As Skaen is associated more closely with domestic transgressions as opposed to national uprisings, he is not known to openly take sides in formal warfare. This, coupled with his cruel and malicious nature, has prevented the Skaenite faith from taking a more general hold on the Dyrwoodan populace, despite the country's strong love of defiance. The possibility of Skaen one day choosing a side in a major conflict is not beyond reason, but the consequences of the Quiet Slave antagonizing an entire nation are too grim to imagine.

Wael | (WAL)

- **ALIASES:** "The Obscured," "The Eyeless Face," "The Hundred Visions," "He Who Sees and Is Not Seen"
- **PORTFOLIO:** Visions, dreams, revelations, illusions, secrets, obfuscation, cryptography, symbols, perception
- **ALLIES:** Unknown
- **FOES:** Unknown
- **SYMBOLS:** Stylish eyes, alone or in groups, sometimes in great masses

Wael's objectives and thought processes are often inscrutable to others—mortal and immortal. It represents both the acts of concealment and obfuscation as well as the acts of revelation and decryption. People pray

to it both to protect and hide their secrets as well as to help them unravel a riddle or problem in front of them.

The Obscured is the only consistent manifestation of Wael, though it has supposedly taken thousands of forms among mortals when it suits it to do so. The Obscured appears as a person of constantly shifting sex, age, race, size, and ethnicity, speaking in an endless number of known and unknown (possibly nonsensical) languages. Two things are constant about the appearance of the Obscured: its face has no eyes and it is surrounded by a swirling "cloud" of eyes of all different sizes and shapes, many seemingly painted or illustrated, others monstrous or tiny, but of incredible number and variety.

Wael's priests are often the founders and caretakers of many centers of learning, including various libraries. The priests' relationship with knowledge is complicated, for they hide as much as they make available to others. There is even an inner sect of elite priests known as the Hand Occult, authors and scribes writing under pseudonyms who attempt to control the flow of esoteric knowledge. Some academics believe there is a more sinister side to the Hand Occult, but most scholars find the strange scribes' activities more bizarre and silly than malicious.



SOULS AND REINCARNATION

The soul is the core essence of all living beings. History and evidence have shown that the soul endures a span of existence reaching far beyond the life of its present host. After death, the soul moves between the physical realm and the unseen realm of the gods. There it interacts with the deity of closest association (e.g., hunters or adventurers finding solace in Galawain) and spends an indeterminate amount of time in its company.

Popular belief holds that the gods actually reside in the center of the world, and the Shroud is closer than most think. The notion could help to explain the phenomenon of adra pillars, great columns of shell-like organic material that pierce the surface of the world from beneath. Some picture adra as the waterways which the souls follow after death like salmon back to their source. Though often a subject of poetry and myth, the idea is seldom included in education. It remains too unsubstantiated to be taken with more than a grain of salt.

Easier to find evidence of is the idea that all beings on Eora are part of an endless cycle of reincarnation. Through various natural or scientific means, the experiences and personalities of an individual's past lives can be coaxed to surface from the farthest depths of their souls. When a person becomes aware of one or more of his or her past lives, the experience is known as an Awakening. The experience can be cathartic, traumatic, or simply confusing, depending on what information surfaces and the manner in which it is brought about. Early symptoms of a soul's Awakening can include postcognitive visions and the intrusion of foreign memories or emotions. In rare instances, the presence of a former personality might compel a person to act in an uncharacteristic fashion or complete some objective left unfulfilled in life. Particularly dominant personalities have been known to wrest control from the most recent "owners" of their bodies in the aftermath of an Awakening, either intermittently, or in some cases, permanently.

There also exist certain unique individuals, typically referred to as "Watchers," who, either through freak accidents or the proddings of animancy, are able to remember the way they perceived the world, just before passing beyond the Shroud—they can see and detect wayward souls in the world, and in some cases commune with them. Watchers possess the mental fortitude to access the soul-memory of others—extending sometimes several lives into the past—and often either lend assistance in crises of the self or use such crises to their own advantage. They can also unlock latent personalities, and interpret the seemingly indecipherable meaning of visions glimpsed from Beyond. Lost souls, who otherwise navigate the world in blindness, see Watchers as beacons of light and hope. Among Watchers, it is common for souls to trail in their wake like an ethereal caravan.

Awakening is a frequent hazard among Watchers. Because of their attunement to the ethereal realm, deep and vivid consciousness of their own souls is often inadvertently triggered, and it is not uncommon for the Watcher to project such powerful visions into the real world as visible manifestations. As a consequence, elaborate delusions have been known to coalesce and drive Watchers to madhouses or even early graves.

The Lost are the deceased who have not yet transitioned Beyond, and cling to the mortal realm as ghosts. They often act blind or confused, babbling half-remembered experiences from one or more past lives. Though lost souls are invisible to average people, it is understood that they congregate around Watchers and adra pillars, the only beacons that stand out in their state of nonexistence.

It might not be outwardly apparent, but souls can age and fracture over long periods of time. Their spiritual essence is not in a fixed state, which is especially apparent once they cross the Beyond. Souls can split apart or merge together during their long absence, a process with unknowable consequences visited upon the subsequent lives

NO TAN HOUR AFTER sailing into port, my two mates and I handed half our wages to the svef girl on Freshwater Alley. We were grateful. From Ondra's Hair to the serpents of Celestos, I'd seen "too many fins cresting the waves," as the old-timers call it. I would have paid her my last penny for an ounce of forgetfulness.

She took our money and led us to our beds, and handed us each a small bag. An old woman sat in the corner with her face in the shadows and a deck of cards by her feet. We paid her no mind as we reached into the bags and massaged the contents into our gums, the substance dark and pasty, staining our mouths black. Then Becken looked up at the woman with eyes barely open.

"Fortuneteller?" he asked the svef girl, who was tidying a bed nearby.

She shook her head.

"Watcher."

Becken stood up on shaky legs and made his way over. He shared a few words with the crone, after which she flipped over a card from the top of the deck. She cackled and banished him with a wave. My mate couldn't have run out the back

door faster if the Pallid Knight was chasing him. Avi-Kan and I were too smoke-slow to follow.

A spell later, Avi-Kan summoned his courage to stand and confront the woman. No sooner had he approached than she flipped a second card. Avi-Kan shot a glance at me over his shoulder and bolted out twice as fast as Becken.

Finally I heaved myself out of bed and approached her. She regarded me with white eyes that stared sightlessly from behind a curtain of rotten straw hair.

"And what of you, my barrel-chested sailor?" she rasped. "Do you wish to see your card?"

I looked at the others. Becken's showed "The Hunter," a whaler rearing back with a harpoon. The second, Avi-Kan's, was a man cutting sheets of blubber from a carcass dragged onto a ship's deck. "The Butcher."

"What is this?" I asked.

"Each card tells of your past. Something of who, or what, you used to be. I could smell your souls coming into port, sailor. Your friends didn't like what they saw inside themselves. Do you

ever imagine your life before the Shroud?"

Though I didn't believe a word of what she said, I bade her flip a card. A weird light shone in those dead marbles under her brow. My card was a sea creature with a majestic, curving tail and a perpetual baleen grin. It swam along the starboard side of a ship, keeping pace with the vessel. All at once, I remembered the sting of a javelin in my side, and a trident stabbing down on my brow. I winced and rubbed the spot. The old woman focused down on my card, her eyes half-lidded and cold.

"You came from the sea and returned to it, wearing an unfamiliar form." She cackled to herself and continued. "Do you know what I see in this card?"

My palms were sweaty with a memory of fins. When I spoke, I half expected my words to come out as song. "What?"

She smiled toothlessly and pulled a rusty harpoon blade from the depths of her rags. Handing it to me, she said: "Revenge."

—Journal of Patient 8682,
Brackenbury Sanitarium

they inhabit. Spiritual fracturing doesn't contribute to a person's negative disposition, but is believed to have a subtler effect on their life's vibrancy and potential. Heroes, brilliant scholars, and charismatic leaders are generally considered to have old souls that are well preserved.

Eir Glanfath and its haunted ruins are notorious for their mysterious soul-energy affinity. During the years of unchecked exploration across Dyrwood, many Aedyran settlers fell victim to the bîawacs (BEE-uh-waks, Glanfathan), or "spirit winds," that seem to fly from the oldest ruins with the

force of an ethereal storm. Victims of bîawacs were physically unharmed, but entered into a catatonic state before their bodies eventually shut down. Watchers and other spiritualists philosophize that the victims' souls join in the relentless tide of the bîawac for all time, and suffer fracturing at an accelerated rate. Tragedies on that order have seldom occurred since the War of Defiance.

BERATH'S WHEEL

After the soul's temporary respite Beyond, their caretaking god delivers a set of instructions. The soul is tasked with finding a new





beginning on Eora and acting on the will of its creator over the span of the next lifetime. The widely accepted notion that everyone carries in him or herself a seed of divine command is the pillar supporting organized religion. A balance struck between free will and the world-steering intentions of the gods offers hope that Eora is progressing toward an ultimate goal, even if the details are unknowable in their design.

Others believe that reincarnation is governed by the manipulation of karmic self-interest, and that leading a “good” life of piety and resourcefulness will guarantee a more favorable life during the next turning of the Wheel.



ADRA PILLARS

Adra is a hard, shell-like substance featured prominently in the remotest regions of Dyrwood and Eir Glanfath. It reaches from

deep beneath the ground in the shape of massive, organic-looking pillars that branch out in striking patterns. Some outcroppings have developed on such a scale that Glanfathans integrated them into the more elaborate and eccentric features of their architecture. The foundations of adra-built structures reach impossibly deep into the earth, and much about their nature or construction is lost. Plenty of adra buildings are still in operation in that part of the world, such as the tower on Heritage Hill, Teir Nowenth. Defiance Bay, where Dyrwoodans fought the last battle for independence, is shielded from the sea by an ancient adra levee that predates the Dyrwoodan colony by millennia.

Since adra has a root or vine-like pattern in its structure, popular theory holds that it grew into that pattern centuries or millennia ago. Whether its growth has stopped, or simply

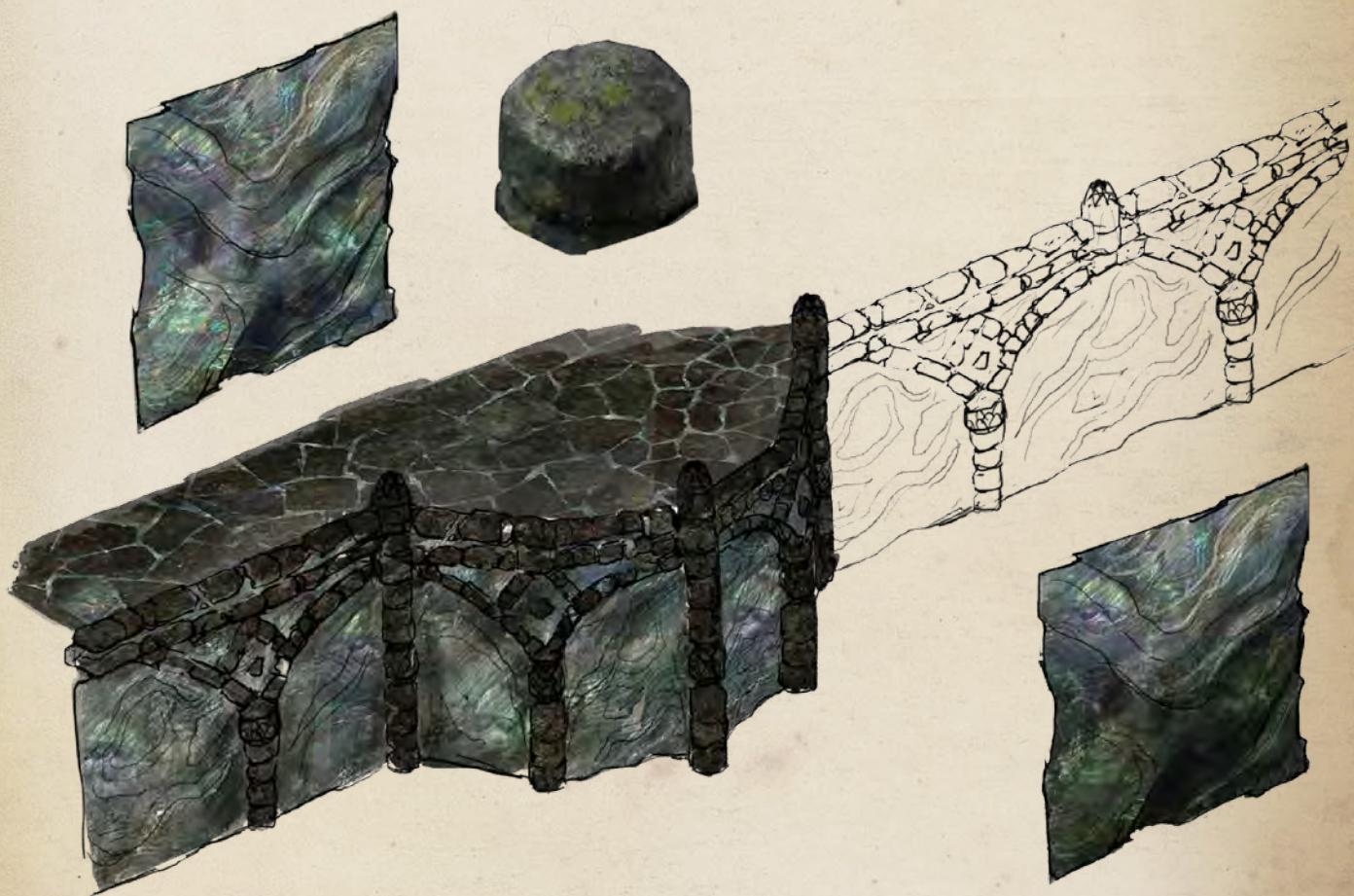
progresses too gradually to measure, is a topic of some discussion.

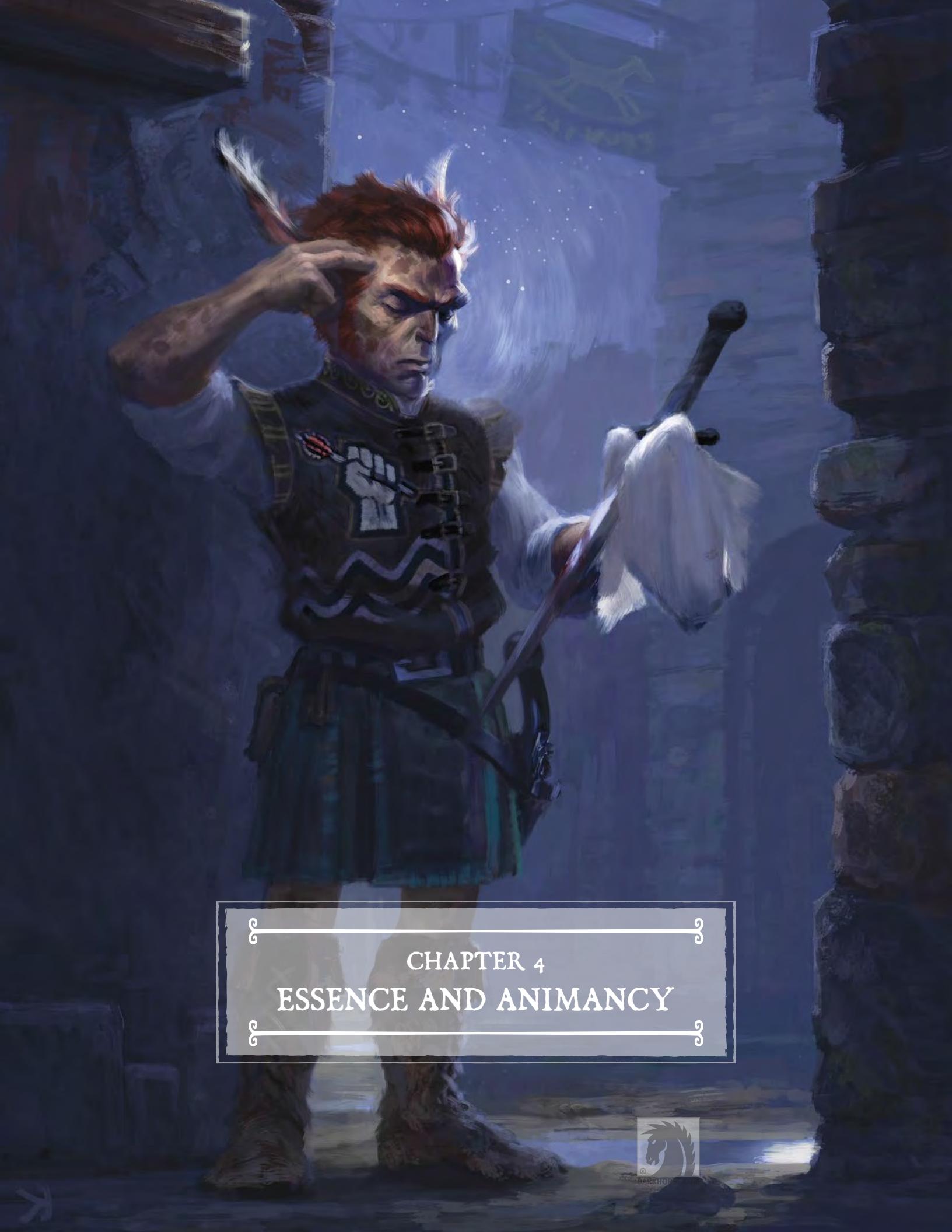
The strangest property of adra is its powerful soul affinity. Watchers and animancers have observed adra storing the souls of the departed as a bottomless spirit well. Popular theory suggests that adra is tied to the soul's process of reincarnation, but how exactly is unknown.

Aedyran royalty have a ceremonial relationship to the pillars. The scepter of the fercönyng (*FAYR-cö-ning*, “first king”) is topped by an egg-shaped stone of adra, which is said to contain the souls of ancient chieftains. Prior to death, the king or queen enters the Ine Sycthrúa (*IH-nah SEEK-throo-ah*, “pearl sepulchers”), a circle of standing adra stones that bind the souls of royalty together.

The self-replenishing confederacy of souls is utilized as a spiritual adviser to future kings, though the meaning of their advice is often debatable.

Living adra is a healthy green color, often marbled with bright copper where the pillar meets the earth. To some, it glows faintly under moonlight. Dead adra is not as vibrant, though hardly diminished in its sturdiness. White adra is an anomaly or defect found in living pillars. Instead of building construction, semiprecious white adra is integrated into decorative jewelry or scrimshaw.





CHAPTER 4
ESSENCE AND ANIMANCY



SOULS AND ESSENTIAL NATURE

Animancy and the soul's potential have been topics of interest for much of recorded history. The Aedyran Empire strictly repressed soulcraft in its former colonies. As a consequence, informed research has only been in practice for the last 140 years, and very few "experts" have made names for themselves in the developing field. Animancers also face a great deal of social judgment and scrutiny for the art's unpredictable and, when mishandled, disastrous results of experimentation.

The science of soulcraft made its longest strides toward legitimacy in 2729 AI, when the Dyrwoodan government and a coterie of animancers opened the Brackenbury Sanitarium to pool resources and better understand maladies of the soul. Prior to this development, sufferers of spiritual afflictions littered the alleys and gutters of Defiance Bay, their conditions worsening to some horrible conclusion. Either they withered from an inability to sustain themselves, or harmed someone during a fit of madness. The funding for animancy was hitherto provided by noble families seeking to improve their lot in the afterlife. While patronage of this sort afforded many strange soul-enhancing devices, it didn't allow for the dissemination of findings to a greater population of the afflicted. Brackenbury remains the strongest endorsement for the art of animancy that any government has ever offered. In an environment where animancy is under fire as a dangerous menace, Brackenbury pushes to better regulate the art by taking ownership over its research.

Teams of animancers throw their weight against different (often misinterpreted) ailments, self-educating and defining new processes of treatment along the way.



ANIMANCY RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

Though animancy has a reputation in some circles for quackery, dubious ethics, and severe danger to practitioners and subjects alike, others hail it as miraculous in its developments, a path to curing all ailments that is still only in its infancy. Both reputations are valid—the course of animancy has been set by benevolent visionaries and power-hungry lunatics alike.

The benefits of the practice at its best, however, are undeniable. Pioneering animancers were responsible for unlocking the mysteries of the brishalgwin, the mind hunters of Eir Glanfath, which led to the development of ciphers. They have been able to effect changes in unbalanced personalities, deemphasizing some traits while enhancing others. They have treated a variety of mental illnesses with unprecedented success. They have been able to map out soul lineages, leading to a far greater understanding of the inner workings of the reincarnation cycle. And this, as its proponents say, is only the beginning.

Animancy has a multitude of subdivisions of study, some having met thus far with greater success than others.

Phrenology

No small part of animancy has been devoted to identifying the locus of soul energy within the body. Since intelligence and awareness stem from the brain, that organ was deemed an appropriate starting point for researching the soul. Speculating physicians mapped the ridges and contours of the head, attempting to place a soul's age and disposition like the rings of a tree.

In the earliest trials, patients complaining of depression or "soul sickness" were prodded and stimulated repeatedly on different cranial regions while a team of onlookers monitored the results. Though not considered a treatment by any stretch, one prone subject exhibited a

strong reaction when, over the course of several hours, an intern animancer stacked copper bands behind his left ear. A hearth orlan and former slave from Readceras, he had been banished and incarcerated due to "an excess of inconsistent behavior." Repeated applications of the stimuli unlocked an alternate personality who spoke fluent Vailian with a specific regional accent. The findings, however mixed, would support the use of copper instruments going forward.

The majority of test subjects responded during sessions when the glabella, or nasal bridge, was repeatedly irritated. Subscribing to the belief that they had pinpointed the soul's "echo point," or closest external contact, this research supported later advances in transorbital lobotomy.

Animancers ultimately determined that the shape of the head was not the most accurate measure of spiritual essence, but agreed that it set the foundation for further study.

Trepanning

In 2732 AI, Brackenbury surgeons used the first trephine to successfully bore out a coin-sized fragment of skull and expose living brain tissue. The procedure was expected to relieve pressure on a soul suffering from irregular fragmentation. Observation yielded no measurable improvement, until copper antennas applied directly to the tissue caused the patient to lose consciousness. A Watcher in attendance reported "ethereal mist raveling snakelike up the shaft of the instrument," indicating that the prod was passively attracting the soul matter.

Harmonic Feedback Therapy

Individuals with near-Awakened souls often react to sounds that trigger latent memories. These are specific auditory cues that resonate in some way with the soul's experience—a familiar voice, a piece of music, etc. Sometimes, the stimuli are enough to facilitate a total awakening of one or several personalities. Unfortunately, there is no way to predict what stimuli will generate its equivalent reaction.

A team at Brackenbury Sanitarium devised a way to access the soul's "trigger nexus" and awaken as much of a patient's spiritual essence as possible in a single treatment.

The patient in question was confirmed as already susceptible to soul stimulation. Watchers who consulted on her case revealed that the fragmented souls of perhaps a hundred past lives crowded and antagonized her primary anima. Nearly any audible or visual stimulus excited a different soul to the forefront of attention, and the unending flood of memories was driving her mad. The theory went that activating every latent soul at the same time would subdue and cancel out the affliction.

After animancers restrained the patient, pins were inserted under the skin of her brow, ears, hands, and feet. A copper wire threading the length of the pins was wrapped around the handles of two tuning forks. When they were struck together, the patient went rigid and the attending Watcher remarked that her body "exploded with light."

The patient entered into a dissociative fugue state, no longer able to recall her own name or why she committed herself to Brackenbury in the first place. Her treatment was lauded as a success.

Magnetic Field Manipulation

The affinity of copper and adra to soul energy has been a topic of deep interest to those invested in treatment. Brackenbury Sanitarium has a long history of enlisting explorers and archaeologists to chart the locations of copper deposits across Dyrwood and Eir Glanfath in hopes of capitalizing on what might be geologically useful properties of certain regions. As such, the Brackenbury Sanitarium is situated at the juncture of several converging "ley lines," making it an ideal location for study.

The notion of magnetic field manipulation arose when an animancer theorized that the soul could be enhanced or perfected by exposing it to as much untapped, subterranean copper as possible. They devised a method of

treatment involving isolation and immurement in a locked container. Since a similar method was already in use as a form of capital punishment, using it as treatment struck some as unorthodox. Brackenbury's approach differed in the respect that the patient would receive several days' worth of rations and water, and the promise of freedom once their treatment was complete.

A smith and several engineers devised an oblong box lined with adra, copper plates, magnets, horseshoes, tuning forks, and lightning rods. Once the patient was curled into a fetal position and locked inside, the box was buried in the sanitarium grounds with a small breathing tube and pull-cord bell leading up to the surface. After three days of monitoring, attendants dug up the site. Both box and patient were gone.

Weeks later, the evening nurses at Brackenbury swore that they witnessed the patient's spectral form strolling down the hallway wearing only a smile. Asked about the condition of the soul, the nurse admitted that he looked "especially vibrant."

THE CHILD SPOKE OF NIGHTMARES.
One morning he showed up at Brackenbury in a panic, his worried aunt in tow. He told us tales of the hag who visited him. Every night she would find him as he slept, place her hand over his chest, and siphon his very essence into her. He wanted us to make it stop.

My colleagues and I exchanged a glance.

I asked how long he had experienced these "nightmares." Almost his entire life. Ever since his parents died in a rowboat accident and he moved in with his aunt. He only summoned up the courage to seek us out after last night's encounter, when he managed to tear a strip of cloth from the witch's robe.

"You can use that to find her, can't you?" The child had done his research. I accepted the fabric and told him we would take care of everything, then instructed an initiate to lead him to the kitchen for a sweet roll. My colleague and I stayed behind with the aunt.

"You have a lot of nerve showing your face here," I said.

Tidal Magnetism Therapy

Inspired by the results of magnetic field manipulation, Brackenbury scholars explored harnessing the moon's gravity to drive away soul sickness. Since the pull of Beläfa exerted a significant force on the ocean, patients were secured to stakes among tide pools (after thorough trepanning) and left for overnight observation.

Early results were promising, but the unexpected appearance of Cawldha Dev in the sanitarium skies wreaked havoc on the experiment. A dozen patients chanted simultaneously in Hylspeak, broke from their bonds, and fled into the turbulent sea. Scholars deemed the moons an effective, if unreliable, source of treatment.

Spiritual Prosthesis

Many of the Hollowborn infants who suffered the consequences of Waidwen's Legacy ended up at Brackenbury. Prior to administering transplants of animal souls, animancers attempted to devise an artificial prosthesis intended to serve the same function as a soul. At this point in their research,

She straightened her posture. "Would you prefer that I had locked him in the basement?"

"Just keep your activities discreet," said my colleague. "We can only help you if you help us."

"I've helped you plenty," she said. "I believe I donated the east wing, and several of your finest devices. I shouldn't have to defend myself here, of all places."

I put up a conciliatory palm. "My illustrious colleague is trying to say that we can all work together to avoid any complications. In the future, I would recommend a sedative for your . . . nephew, so that he sleeps better. I can find the appropriate herbs in the medicine locker. That should put an end to his . . . Well, it isn't a nightmare if he can't remember it."

Now that I've illustrated my involvement in those horrors—and everything that happened next—I have nothing more to say on the matter.

—Suicide note from Brand Fyrtrig,
assistant director of Brackenbury Sanitarium



removing a soul was simply a matter of procedure. Implanting another one was not yet standard practice.

A multitude of philosophical complications arose during the early research. If mortals created a working soul, would it still engage with the cycle of reincarnation? Would the gods allow it to join the Wheel? None of those even approached any of the practical questions. Like so many problems, they could only learn through trial and error.

One eccentric animancer reasoned that two souls could copulate in a single body, and that their union would spawn a litter to be distributed among the Hollowborn. Although his colleagues balked at the idea, he pushed the matter by attempting a spiritual joining with the help of a consenting scullery maiden. Like too many animancers, his colorful past included years of experimentation. An undiagnosed weakness of the anima resulted in his comparatively frail soul being devoured by the scullery maiden's vivacious one. After the scholar's untimely demise, the scullery maiden rose in the ranks of soulcraft scholars, later taking the mantle of Brackenbury's director. The matter was judiciously pushed aside.

The most sensible idea involved the recycling of souls soon to be dead. Animancers laid Hollowborn infants onto death-beds, a sliver of adra acting as conductor between them and the recently deceased. Unfortunately, there were simply too many afflicted children to continue the practice in the absence of a war or plague to fill up hospice beds.

Further experiments with machinery and samplings of adra yielded mixed results, but never a soul conjured out of the ether. This type of research is still a regular occurrence at Brackenbury, for fear that a scourge like Waidwen's Legacy should ever return.

Immortality Studies

During the years when animancers were solely employed by wealthy patrons, many

of them pursued the art's equivalent of a philosopher's stone: unlocking the secrets of immortality. Popular interest in the topic elevated it to one of the constant goals at Brackenbury.

Many methods were explored, but the results were often too gruesome to pursue more than once. Early designs involved mummifying terminally ill patients in wrappings of copper wire and adra masks, effectively imprisoning the soul in the body. Neither living nor wholly dead, the patients exhibited dim awareness of their surroundings and were prone to violent outbursts. Driving a copper nail through the head or heart was a less than effective means of pinning the soul in place.

Brackenbury's eccentric founder, Ethelmoer, was once the willing subject of a "successful" soul transplant. His essence and awareness currently reside in a statue on the asylum grounds—an appropriate fate, as Ethelmoer never wanted Brackenbury's management in undeserving hands. To this day he holds the title of head warden, though his right to govern asylum matters is frequently challenged. Skirting Ethelmoer's authority is neither unpreceded nor particularly difficult to accomplish. New initiates have taken to calling him "Brackenbury's first patient," though never within earshot of his pedestal.

Since corporeal immortality seemed beyond reach, animancers fashioned adra talismans and placed them on the chests of dying patients to gauge how much of the soul's awareness remained intact after death. One such talisman was inserted in the brow of a copper-and-canvas golem. The figure stood up and took several steps before collapsing in a lifeless heap. Its inert remains were long on display in the sanitarium's lobby, where visitors reported it shifting positions while unobserved.







CHAPTER 5
PEOPLE AND CULTURES

A diverse medley of races populate Eora. Their separating characteristics are more apparent on a cultural level, with racial boundaries presenting neither roadblocks nor advantages in any given dealing between civilized men and women. An elf from one of the Glanfathan tribes, for example, would share more kinship with a dwarf of a neighboring tribe than with an elf from the Aedyran Empire. The one certainty is that Eora's races can breed only with their like kind, and unions between divergent races have never proven successful from that standpoint.

THE KITH

Aumaua

The aumaua are a large race that originated and typically live and work in warm oceanic climates. Though they are not the most widely traveled racial group in the world (that distinction belongs either to Calbandran humans or Aptapo dwarves), they have been exploring and settling continuously for the longest period of time, over 20,000 years.

Aumaua have two widely divergent ethnicities that are geographically separated by thousands of miles, likely due to a huge migration that took place over 15,000 years ago. Aumaua are not found in large numbers in any heterogeneous cultures, but when they do integrate into non-aumaua cultures, they tend to assimilate fully. They are occasionally found in Dyrwood, the Vailian Republics, Readceras, and, rarely, in Aedyr. They are most often found in or near port cities.

Aumaua are physically distinct from other races due to their towering size, "inverted triangle" physique, odd skin and hair coloration and textures, and head shape. Aumaua natural lifespans are typically between seventy and one hundred and fifteen years.

Island Aumaua

The most common way non-aumaua distinguish aumaua is between southern "island" aumaua and northern "coastal" aumaua. Southern aumaua are physiologically similar

in many ways, but have coloration that is starkly different from their northern kin. As their nickname suggests, island aumaua originate in a huge archipelago a thousand miles south of the Vailian Republics.



Though still uncommon in Dyrwood and surrounding environments, island aumaua are more commonly encountered than coastal aumaua, who are quite rare. When encountered around Dyrwood, they are often laborers, fishermen, or sailors.

- **FEATURES:** Higher body fat (relative to coasts), not in general) very wide nose bridges, and widely spaced eyes. Round or square faces. Upturned or prominent eyes with epicantic folds. Long skulls with prominent domes. Hair does not grow on the

crown of the head. Slightly webbed hands and feet (below the second knuckle). Long arms. Tiny ears that barely protrude from the head.

- **SKIN:** Warm tones, often brown or yellow running into (fish-like) white.

- **HAIR:** Clay-red, copper, green-brown, brown, black. Wavy or kinky texture.

- **EYES:** Yellow, silver, blue, copper, hazel.

Coastal Aumaua

Dwelling primarily in the Northern Hemisphere, so-called “coastal” aumaua live in a conquered mainland region, mostly along the coast. Coastal aumaua cultures are more centralized and urban than their southern counterparts, though they are still involved in seafaring.

While it isn’t accurate to think of island aumaua as peaceful and coastal aumaua as warlike, that is exactly how many people in Dyrwood view them. The reason for this is connected to the ancient campaign of war in which aumaua pushed Thyrtan, Natlan, and orlan communities out of a number of territories. Because this successive series of wars allowed the aumaua to resettle the northern lands, it is vaguely recollected in many people’s minds.

Coastal aumaua are more common in Aedyr than in Dyrwood or surrounding areas, but when they are encountered, they are often mercenaries, bodyguards, or soldiers.

- **FEATURES:** Very wide nose bridges and widely spaced eyes. Rectangular or square faces. Narrow, almond, or round eyes. Long skulls with prominent domes. Slightly webbed hands and feet (below the second knuckle). Long arms. Tiny ears that barely protrude from the head.

- **SKIN:** Cool tones, often blues, grays, or greens running into (fish-like) white.

- **HAIR:** Silver, blond, strawberry blond, brown. Straight or wavy texture.

- **EYES:** Yellow, silver, blue, gold, green, brown.

Dwarves

Dwarves and orlans are equally common in Dyrwood, though dwarves are typically found in colonies, not the forested interior. Most historians believe dwarves originated somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere and

have spread rapidly in waves over thousands of years, almost always via land travel. Many dwarf-heavy cultures are noted for being among the most aggressive terrestrial colonists in the world. However, these colonial expeditions fail more often than they succeed, and dwarven colonial ruins are scattered across the known world.



Physically, dwarves are known for being short and thick limbed. They tend to be extremely sturdy and durable, which is often attributed to having spent millennia living in rocky environments more suited to goats than people. Their natural lifespan is typically between 110 and 190 years.

Mountain Dwarves—Aptapo

(*AHP-tah-po*, from *aptapolare*, “goat people,” *Vailian*)

Mountain dwarves originated in the continent to the east of Dyrwood, but have spread through the area several times before, with most of the evidence being found in remote mountain ranges. Like all dwarves, Aptapo have always been smaller than humans. Unlike orlans, who are frequently subjugated, the Aptapo have always directly fought back and fortified their residences rather than move on. Also unlike orlans, mountain dwarves are strong and tough for their size.

Mountain dwarves are common in the Vailian Republics and uncommon in Dyrwood and Readceras. They are rarely encountered in Aedyr, most often traveling with Vailian trading ships.

- **FEATURES:** Broad-bridged, strong noses. Broad, square, inverted-triangle or inverted-heart-shaped faces. Broad jaws and necks. Almond or thin eyes. Deep-set eyes, very prominent brows.

- **SKIN:** Fair to dark brown, tough and leathery, often creased even among the young.

- **HAIR:** Blond, strawberry blond, red, auburn, brown, and black. Wavy, curly, or kinky texture.

- **EYES:** Green, hazel, gold, gray, brown, black.

Boreal Dwarves—Enutanik

(*eh-NOO-tah-nik*, “people of the tundra,” *Enutanik*)

Most boreal dwarves live in the remote southern island of Naasitaq, where they share the rocky tundra and snow-covered forests with migratory pale elves and the coast-hugging ships of aumaua. Some also live in the cramped, humid, towering cities of Aedyr, among the aggressive explorers who crossed an ocean to colonize Dyrwood. Like their northern cousins, Enutanik share an instinctive drive to explore and cover long distances in spite of their small stature.

Boreal dwarves are extremely rare in Aedyr, more common in the Vailian Republics, and seldom encountered in Dyrwood or Readceras.

- **FEATURES:** Moderately wide, flat noses. Broad, flat, round faces. Almond, downturned, or thin eyes with epicantic folds. Shallow-set eyes, not-prominent brows.

- **SKIN:** Tan to dark tan, tough and leathery, often creased even among the young.

- **HAIR:** Auburn, brown, black, gray. Straight, thin.

- **EYES:** Hazel, brown, copper, deep violet, black.



Elves

Elves are the second-most-common race in Dyrwood and heavily populate both the Aedyr-founded colonies and the deep reaches of Eir Glanfath. Elf-dominated cultures are among the least expansive and colonial, the Aedyrans being a notable exception (though only after a human kingdom merged with an elven kingdom). Physically, elves are known for their speed. They tend to be about 10% shorter than humans and slimmer of build.



Wood Elves—Sceltrfolk or Cythwod
(SKEL-trr-folk, “sheltered people,”
Hylspeak; SEETH-wod, “home wood,”
Aedyran)

Wood elves originated approximately 3,500 miles north of present-day Aedyr, south of where the Thyrtan are believed to have lived long ago. They have progressively migrated south through the forests at a similar pace to the Thyrtan, and now cover most of the continent all the way south across the equator. Additionally, a large number of Sceltrfolk elves are believed to have migrated across the sea to Eir Glanfath in some prehistoric era. Glanfathan elves are physiologically identical

to those from Aedyr but share no culture in common. Their natural lifespan is typically 200–310 years.

Their Hylspeak name for themselves, Sceltrfolk, contains the word *folk*, which is a homophone for *folk*, a common name for humans. In many ways, Sceltrfolk from Aedyr share more in common with a nearby human ethnic group (the Thyrtan) than any other. This is not true of Sceltrfolk from Eir Glanfath.

- **FEATURES:** Thin and pointed noses, narrow rectangular or oval faces. Round, almond, or prominent eyes. Deep-set eyes, strong brows, high cheekbones. Pointed ears. High, overly arched eyebrows.
- **SKIN:** Fair to light tan.
- **HAIR:** Blond, red, brown, or black. Hair texture is straight or wavy. No facial hair.
- **EYES:** Blue, green, gold, hazel, gray.

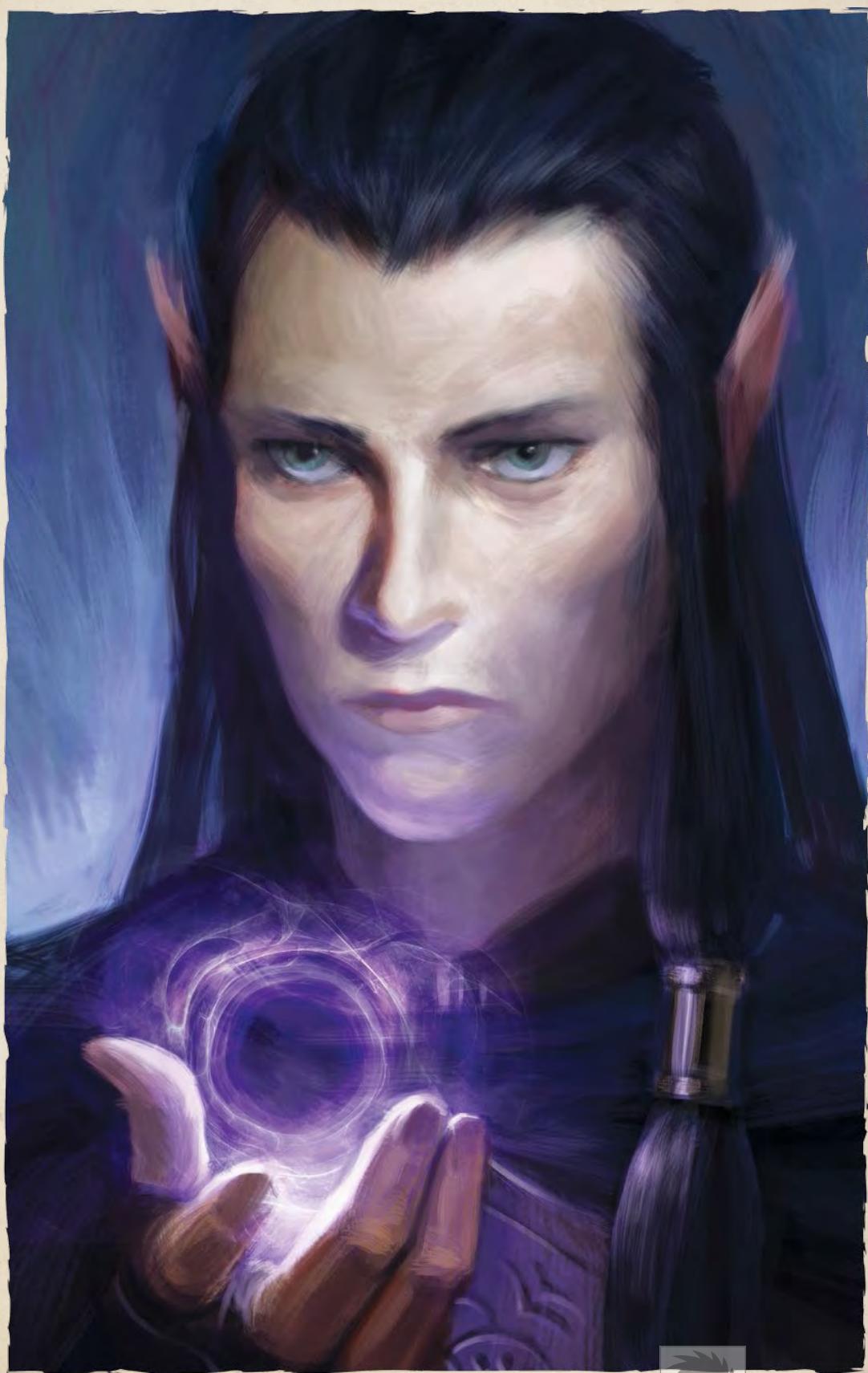
Pale Elves—Glamfellen

(GLAHM-fel-len, “twilight dwellers,”
Glamfellen)

It is unclear exactly how long ago the Glamfellen came to the southern polar regions of the world, but they have lived there for at least 12,000 years, based on their continuous contact with aumaua traders. They appear to be among the most stationary ethnic groups in the known world, migrating within the polar region but seldom venturing far north. They are rare in all northern lands, and most people consider them exotic (if they have seen one at all).

Some linguistic similarities between the Glamfellen, Aedyran, and Hylspeak languages suggest that the Glamfellen elves lived in the Northern Hemisphere once long ago and probably broke off from the Sceltrfolk tribes.

- **FEATURES:** Mid-width to narrow noses, heart-shaped or round faces. Almond, thin, hooded eyes with epicanthic folds and large irises. Mid-set eyes, wider spacing, weaker brows. Pointed ears, arched eyebrows.
- **SKIN:** Extremely pale and translucent, ranging from snow white to fair. Their skin often lacks any warmth other than their faintly visible circulatory system.
- **HAIR:** White, blond, strawberry blond. Straight, thin. Males can have facial hair.
- **EYES:** Green, blue, gray, gold, red, violet, pink.



Humans (“Folk”)

Of all the races in Dyrwood, humans are the most abundant. They run the middle of the road when it comes to physical prowess—stronger than orlans, weaker than aumaua—and as a standard live 60–100 years. Humans trace their origin from multiple regions around Eora, though most of them settled on or around the equator.

Meadow Folk—Thyrtan

(THEER-tan, “fair,” Aedyran)

Meadow folk originated in the far North, but migrated south (for unknown reasons) toward the equator starting almost 10,000 years ago. They have now been near the equator for about 2,000 years. They have traditionally lived at the edge of Sceltrfolk lands, working the open plains.

Meadow folk are the most common humans in Aedyr, Dyrwood, and Readceras. They can also be found in small numbers in the Vailian Republics.

- **FEATURES:** Thinner, more pointed noses. Thin lips. Rectangular or oval face shapes. Round, almond, or prominent eyes. Deep-set eyes and moderately strong brows.
- **SKIN:** Fair to light tan.
- **HAIR:** Blond, red, brown, or black. Texture is straight, wavy, or curly.
- **EYES:** Blue, green, hazel, gray, violet, or brown.

Ocean Folk—Calbandra

(cahl-BAHN-drah, “warm ring,” Vailian)

The Calbandra originated near the equator on the other side of the world. It is believed that they migrated heavily due to rapid cultural expansion in the last two thousand years. Most cultures recognize that Calbandra are currently the most widespread human ethnicity in this part of the world.

Ocean folk are the dominant culture of the Vailian Republics, though they are also common in Dyrwood. They are rare in both Aedyr and Readceras.

- **FEATURES:** Broad, flat noses. Full lips. Round, almond, or prominent eyes. Mid-to-shallow-set eyes and strong brows.
- **SKIN:** Light brown to extremely dark brown.
- **HAIR:** Rust brown, brown, black hair.

Texture may be straight, wavy, curly, or kinky.

- **EYES:** Brown, green, gray, hazel, yellow-green, red-brown.



Savannah Folk—Natlan

(NAHT-lahn, “origin” or “original,” Katl)

The Natlan originated just south of the equator, north of Readceras. Though they have migrated north heavily, most of the ethnic group has remained in the same location for well over 10,000 years. There are some cultural and anthropological indications that Natlan were near the Engwithan culture at some time prior to its presumed downfall, but Natlan-dominated cultures seemingly have no records of their interaction.

Savannah folk are uncommon in Dyrwood and the Vailian Republics. They are more common in Readceras and very rare in Aedyr.

- **FEATURES:** Moderately broad noses. Moderately full lips. Almond or narrow eyes, sometimes with epicanthic folds. Mid-set eyes with shallow brows.
- **SKIN:** Lightly tan to dark tan skin with a warm reddish tone.
- **HAIR:** Auburn, green-brown, brown, or black hair. Hair texture is straight or wavy. Minimal, if any, facial hair.
- **EYES:** Blue-green, hazel, dull orange, brown, or black eyes.

Orlans

Orlans are relatively short (50%–60% of human height) humanoids. Physically, they are notable for their small stature, hair-covered bodies, two-toned skin, and exceptionally large, hair-covered ears. They are also, by nature, nocturnal, though most orlans living among other races adapt to a diurnal schedule.

Due to their size, orlans have been victimized and marginalized by most of the cultures with whom they have come into contact. As a result, it is rare to find large communities of them and they have progressively retreated into heavily wooded environments over the last few centuries.

Many orlan communities have also adopted brutal guerrilla tactics including heavy use of traps and poison in the surrounding environment. As a result, even orlans raised in urban cultures often share their rural kin's nasty reputation.

The natural lifespan of an orlan is typically between 50 and 80 years.

Hearth Orlans

So-called for their relatively sedentary nature, hearth orlans originated from the same place as their wild kin: the forested parts of the continent to the north of Readceras. While the wild orlans have stayed deep in the forests and jungles of the continent, hearth orlans progressively moved closer to lands settled by other races and established semipermanent communities. The differences are not just cultural; hearth orlans are dramatically less

hirsute than wild orlans, and generally more accepted by other races because of it.

Hearth orlans are often found as slaves in Readceras and the Vailian Republics, and occasionally in Aedyr. One of the treaty terms between Dyrwood and the orlans and elves of Eir Glanfath was the liberation of orlan slaves. This has been honored, but many hearth orlans who continue to live in Dyrwood are indentured servants, slaves in most practical ways.

While wild orlans are feared for their tenacity and explosive violence, hearth orlans are feared for their ability to conceal hostility. The "hearth" and "wild" appellations were adopted by other races for the purposes of discussing them and encompassing their role in society, but are often considered derogatory among orlans.

- **FEATURES:** Enormous, fur-lined (on the back) ears. Small or narrow, often upturned noses. Round- or heart-shaped faces. Narrow or almond eyes. Deep-set eyes and very prominent brows.
- **SKIN:** Two-toned, often light tan and a darker tan or brown. The tone division generally follows a "line" around the body and is more or less symmetrical outside of the "edge" between the two. Orlan skin often has a green or yellowish undertone to it. Orlan skin that appears to be "bare" always has a surprisingly thick coat of transparent hair on it.
- **HAIR:** Strawberry blond, red, orange, blue-green, green, green-brown, brown, black. Coarse and thick, wavy, or curly texture. It covers about 50% of their body and can go through a variety of gradations.
- **EYES:** Large irises with cat-slit pupils. Almond, round, or upturned eyes. Blue, green, gold, yellow, silver, violet, hazel.

Wild Orlans

Wild orlans are only rarely found in established communities. They are the "original" orlans who continue to live in the deepest forests and jungles between the tropics. Wild orlans have only been significantly separated from hearth orlans for a thousand years, but due to the short life cycles of orlans, the few genetic differences between them have appeared rapidly.

The most obvious difference between hearth and wild orlans is that the latter are almost

entirely covered with hair (or fur, depending on how you look at it). The face and neck of a wild orlan are covered with hair as thick as any other part of their body. This, and their culture's general xenophobia, has caused other races to classify them as "wild."

Wild orlans are common in the deep reaches of Eir Glanfath, alongside many Sceltrfolk. They are also less commonly encountered in Dyrwood or enslaved in Readceras and other lands, in turn often traded by Vailians. Most people consider wild orlans to be poor slaves due to their lack of language skills and their extremely violent nature.

- **FEATURES:** Enormous, fur-lined (all over) ears. Small or narrow, often upturned noses. Round- or heart-shaped faces. Narrow or almond eyes. Deep-set eyes and very prominent brows.
- **SKIN:** Two-toned, colors often vary widely, with the darkest tones being a dark chocolate brown. The tone division generally follows a "line" around the body and is more or less symmetrical outside of the "edge" between the two. Orlan skin often has a green or yellowish undertone to it. Wild orlans have very little visible skin, but even "bare" skin has a surprisingly thick coat of transparent hair on it.
- **HAIR:** Yellow, yellow-green, red, orange, blue-green, green, green-brown, brown, black. Coarse and thick, straight, or wavy texture. It covers about 90% of the body and can go through a variety of gradations.
- **EYES:** Large irises with cat-slit pupils. Almond, round, or upturned eyes. Blue, green, gold, yellow, silver, violet, hazel.

Godlike

The godlike are the children of kith who have been blessed (or cursed, depending on personal or social view) with the physical manifestation of a divine spark granted by the gods. Godlike manifest their divine heritage in a variety of ways—wings, horns, strange birthmarks, talons, odd eyes—but they always manifest it somehow. Though their appearances vary, they are unmistakably otherworldly when anyone gets a clear look at them.

Sometimes, the reaction they get is overwhelmingly positive. Many times, the reaction is overwhelmingly hostile. For better or worse, the physical characteristics that mark them as

godlike always come with supernatural blessings (and curses) of their own.

Godlike are equally uncommon all over the world. No one region seems to have any more or less than another. The life expectancy of godlike tends to be similar to that of the mother's and father's race. All godlike are sterile. They are incapable of reproduction with each other or any other creature. This fact often colors how cultures regard them and their roles in society.

Godlike Variety

It's not accurate to say that there is only one ethnicity of godlike because most godlike are fundamentally unique. Even if there



are physiological similarities between two godlike, the circumstances of their birth and upbringing mean those similarities don't mean much.



There are only two constants for godlike. First, the shape of their heads is distinctly and obviously unlike any other kith. It's virtually impossible for them to conceal their nature without drawing an enormous amount of attention.

Second, godlike limbs are always covered in some sort of growth (scales, feathers, talons, etc.) or energy that is also obviously not like other kith. It doesn't prevent them from

wearing clothing of any sort, but if their limbs are exposed, their nature is obvious to anyone who sees it.

- **FEATURES:** Facial structure tends to be as the mother's and father's (e.g., a mountain dwarf godlike will tend to have a wide jaw and more square face shape, even if the skin coloration is completely different).
- **SKIN:** Skin tones sometimes come from the mother and father, but often are completely unnatural or blend into some sort of unnatural growth (e.g., moss, feathers, etc.). In many cases, godlike skin is completely unnatural, looking like it is made of water, fire, gold, or some other seemingly impossible material. Substances like fire or water have a realistic appearance, but do not burn or transfer moisture. Like many aspects of godlike physiology, their seemingly supernatural attributes defy commonly understood physical truths.
- **HAIR:** Hair is often not hair but horn, fire, plant growths, feathers, or other oddities. Sometimes they do have hair but it is of an strange tone or texture and blends in with other growths.
- **EYES:** Godlike eyes are always unusual in some way, from an unnatural coloration to odd iris shapes (e.g., goat or bird iris shapes) to no visible iris or pupil.



CULTURES OF THE EASTERN REACH AND BEYOND

The Free Palatinate of Dyrwood (DEER-wood, Aedyran)

- **ADJECTIVE:** Dyrwoodan
- **DEMONYM:** Dyrwoodan
- **LANGUAGE:** Aedyran, some Hylspeak, Vailian, Glanfathan
- **POPULATION:** 1,900,000. 80% Resident, 20% Transient. 20% Urban, 80% Rural. Meadow Folk (40%), Wood Elves (30%), Hearth Orlans (10%), Ocean Folk (5%), Mountain Dwarves (5%), Savannah Folk (5%), Other (5%).
- **GOVERNMENT:** Elective monarchy, the duc or duchess, elected by seven erls who are all hereditary rulers.

Duc Admeth Hadret was originally an erl palatine of the Aedyran Empire. When he rebelled against the empire, he chose to call himself a duc (the Vailian term for an independent ruler

of a city-state) instead of using the subservient feudal Aedyran term *gréf* (*grayv*, “duke”).

- **PROMINENT FAITHS:** Magran, Skaen, Galawain.
- **PRODUCTS:** Wyr (*weer*, “wire,” Aedyran) wool, gal glas (*gahl glahs*, “green thorn,” Glanfathan) timber, Glanfathan deer hide, tin, lead, iron, copper.

The independent nation that was formerly a colony and later a large, remote duchy of the Aedyran Empire. Led by their duc, Admeth Hadret, the people successfully fought for their independence over an excessively burdensome campaign to colonize the dangerous ruins of Eir Glanfath. Despite the fact that they are no longer, properly speaking, a palatinate, the people of Dyrwood continue to refer to their home as a “Free Palatinate” out of pride. Most residents of Dyrwood are Aedyran humans, elves, and dwarves, but some are also culturally integrated orlans or children of Glanfathan elves. Despite having fought a war with the Aedyran Empire in the past, they are now trading partners. In addition to the persistent grudge because of their violent history, their one continued point of contention is exploration and colonization of Eir Glanfath, which Aedyr continues to push through official and unofficial means.

Dyrwoodan virtues and vices are heavily tied to their recent history. Their social memory is rooted in the lives and realities of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. As such, it strikes a balance between the traditional and ideological outlook of Aedyrans and the practical, in-the-moment culture of the Vailian Republics.

The Seven Erldoms

There are now seven erldoms (nine before the revolution) in Dyrwood. Each is overseen by an erl who is elected and reports to the duc. These large spans of land are, in turn, broken up into smaller regions controlled by thayns.

Current Erldoms:

Helsgate—Includes Hel’s Gate Citadel, Road’s End, and most of the land north of Pearlwood Bluff but excluding Gilded Vale and the road from Defiance Bay to Geiran’s Grasp. Helsgate was the site of the Broken Stone War and a

great deal of violent conflict during the revolution. After the revolution, Helsgate was considered so important to the security of the new nation that Gilded Vale was excluded from it. However, the expected long-term follow-up war from Aedyr never happened and, as a result, Helsgate is, along with Coldwater, one of the most sedate erldoms in the nation.

The Grasp—The largest and historically most difficult-to-manage erldom, the Grasp encompasses everything northwest of the Isce Ien River from Gilded Vale in the West to north of Eina’s Rest in the East. It includes Geiran’s Grasp, New Heomar, Gilded Vale, and the ruins of Caed Nua. Incorporates the old erldom of Yenwood (see below).

Coldwater—A long stretch of land running from the Grasp in the West to Cold Morn in the East. One of the most placid erldoms. It incorporates the old erldom of Cwynsrun (see below).

Tenferths—Named for the ten fords along its wandering coast, it is home to Echo Bay, Fleetbreaker Castle, and King’s Lantern.

Norwaech—The northeastern erldom shares a frontier with Readceras and holds New Yarma, Godhammer Citadel (formerly Halgot Citadel), and the isolated Hangman’s Abbey.

Baelreach—Containing the capital of Dyrwood (Defiance Bay), Forked Vale, Dyrford, and Baelreach. This is a frontier territory but it sees a lot of traffic.

Ashfall—Still one of the more contested territories in Dyrwood, Ashfall was the site of the War of Black Trees. Its eastern border shifts with pressure from Glanfathans and the boldness of settlers and explorers. The Abbey of the Cloven Wheel is technically



part of Ashfall but the monks have never sworn fealty to any sovereign.

Former Erldoms:

Yenwood—Previously encompassing Gilded Vale, Caed Nua, and Magran's Fork, Yenwood sided with Aedyr during the revolution. After the revolution, its duc and erls decided to incorporate its territory into the Grasp. However, much of Yenwood effectively operates with little oversight from the Grasp's erl.

Cwynsrun—The Aedyran Mecwyn Eina II loved a stretch of the Isce Ien River so much that, by imperial decree, it was named for her (she died of natural causes during a visit in Eina's Rest, just south of the former territory). Because of its high level of imperial favor, the erl sided with Aedyr during the revolution. Like Yenwood, it was incorporated into another erldom (Coldwater) after the revolution.

Virtues

Independence

Most Dyrwoodans value their independence highly, believe it was earned by the sacrifice of previous generations, and are sensitive to perceived infringements upon it. People are expected to be defiant toward anyone who promotes the reduction of personal liberty.

Perseverance

The colonial settlements went through difficult times, but the perseverance of the original settlers paved the way (sometimes literally) for future generations. People who endure hardship without complaint are highly respected.

Sacrifice

Dyrwood earned its independence through collective voluntary sacrifice. Acts in a similar spirit are respected and admired. Admeth Hadret is considered to be the first and best of all Dyrwoodans, his life and death embodying the virtues of independence, perseverance, and sacrifice.

Communal Hospitality

Because of Dyrwood's colonial history and

tradition of homesteading, communities are expected to provide a campsite at the edge of town for travelers. The community is also expected to, by default, provide protection for people using the campsite unless those people turn out to be in the wrong (such as those on the run for crimes). Travelers who overstay their welcome are encouraged to move on and, if they don't take the hint, are eventually driven out by a mob.

Vigilantism and Feuding

In the early days of Dyrwood, there weren't many authorities to appeal to in times of civic trouble. People learned to handle problems themselves. The side effect of Dyrwoodan vigilantism was a pernicious trend of long-running feuds. Even though "official" order has come to most Dyrwoodan settlements, the cultural mentality toward immediate threats is to respond personally (with violence) and never to forget any slight against your family—or, in extreme cases, your entire community.

Thanks to Watchers, the Dyrwoodan belief in feuding now even extends to spiritual descendants (if you discover a spiritual connection to a party with an unresolved feud, you are expected to resolve it). Dyrwoodan authorities discourage feuding overall, but are especially opposed to "soul feuds."

Vices

Servility

Dyrwoodans hate servility, and even hated it when orlan slavery was widespread. Despite exhibiting the issues of class that exist in any feudal or monarchist culture, Dyrwoodans still expect subordinates to show a "strong chin"—meaning they stand upright when dealing with anyone. Bowing and kneeling are not only frowned upon, but illegal in some communities.

Shirking

Among the worst accusations despite its seemingly mild tone, shirking can apply to any personal responsibility to others or the community. It can also apply to getting others (e.g., law authorities, mercenaries) to help fight

your feuds. If someone is known as a shirker, they're largely looked down upon. In extreme cases, entire families can earn reputations as shirkers, especially if they didn't contribute to some large community event (a battle, putting out a big fire, etc.).

Selfishness

In the same spirit with which Dyrwoodans view sacrifice as a virtue, they view the lack of proactive kindness and charity as selfishness. In some circumstances this can be expressed as passive-aggressive courtesy, but in most social interactions it is ingrained, habitual, but genuine politeness.

Lingering

This is a nontraditional use of the word *lingering*. In Dyrwood, it refers to hanging around in or very near Engwithan ruins. It's considered mortally dangerous and also spiritually dangerous due to the unpredictable appearance of biawacs (spirit winds). If someone is accused of lingering it also generally implies they are mentally unstable or untrustworthy.

Face Painting

A racist condemnation. If someone is "face painting," they're acting like (or overly sympathizing with) Glanfathans. It refers both to the Glanfathan elf practice of using body paint as well as the multicolor fur patterns of wild orlans. Not all Dyrwoodans use the term "face painting" or think that such behavior is bad, but there is a strong streak of racism in many communities, especially near Eir Glanfath.

The Penitential Regency of Readceras (RAY-ahd-seh-rabs, Aedyran)

- **ADJECTIVE:** Readceran
- **DEMONYM:** Readceran
- **LANGUAGE:** Aedyran, some Hylspeak, some Karl
- **POPULATION:** 180,000. 85% Resident, 15% Transient.
20% Urban, 80% Rural. Meadow Folk (40%), Wood Elves (25%), Hearth Orlans (20%—mostly slaves), Mountain Dwarves (5%), Savannah Folk (5%), Other (5%).
- **GOVERNMENT:** Readcerans consider itself a temporary ecclesiocracy; being centrally under the rule of a god, but governed by a formal priesthood until such time as

Eothas returns to reclaim his throne. Municipal figures are established as placeholders for the deity. Within the church of Eothas, an elite group of five devout is elected to fill the chairs of the Morning Council. Their public voice is known as the Vigilant, though he or she has no additional powers beyond this capacity. While order is maintained on a local level, the church represents all authority in the governing of Readceras.

• **PROMINENT FAITHS:** Eothas, Galawain, Wael

• **PRODUCTS:** Vorlas (purple dye), corn, corn flour, wool, cotton (minimal), lumber

The ecclesiastic nation that was formerly an Aedyran colony and later an independent theocratic dictatorship, the Divine Kingdom of Readceras. Not many years ago, a popular religious movement took hold in the countryside, in part sparked by the collapse of the nation's vorlas market, resultant poverty, and general civil unrest. The leader of the movement was a farmer named Waidwen who claimed that the god of light, Eothas, had appeared to him in the night and told him to punish the colonial governor for leading the people to ruin. Waidwen's success led to his apparent transformation into a living vessel for Eothas, after which he became the first and only "divine king" of the country. His rule produced a subsequent purge of heretics and followers of other faiths across the nation. Events related to this purge led to the Saint's War with Dyrwood, which informally ended in 2808 AI when Waidwen was apparently destroyed by a massive bomb north of Halgot Citadel (popularly renamed Godhammer Citadel).

Readceran culture reflects its recent history. While not all Readcerans are Eothasian, the widespread adoption of the Eothasian faith affects their collective culture heavily. More than the other prominent cultures, Readcerans have a black-and-white view of how life should be lived and are even more conservative than Aedyrans.

Virtues

Optimism

Heavily influenced by the Eothasian faith, Readcerans are optimistic in their endeavors. No matter how many times you fall, you're expected



to get back up and try again. Each day brings a new opportunity to test and improve yourself. Readcerans celebrate those who embody the spirit of optimism, regardless of the results.

Faith

Sincere belief is a part of life. Readcerans admit that no one can know the unknowable, but belief in the nature of the universe and how it works is important to them. They believe it helps ground

your actions and that it prepares your soul for its inevitable release from your mortal body. A faithful soul, they believe, will be well placed by the gods in the next life.

Propriety

There are a bundle of behaviors that constitute “proper” behaviors. Men and women should marry at a certain age, have children

by a certain age, be employed in a number of specific ways based on class, dress and wear their hair a certain way, etc. Unlike the Vailian preoccupation with the minutiae of social interactions, Readcerans are concerned with larger-scale issues such as your place in society and how you fit into it—how you live, grow up, grow old, and die. People who do what they are supposed to do are good people.

Vigilance

As a nation, Readceras has undergone a series of traumatic events. Most recently and memorably, their divine leader, Saint Waidwen, was destroyed. Readcerans exhort each other to be vigilant—for themselves, for their families, and for their country. They have a heavy focus on preparedness and can be seen by outsiders as overly cautious.

Discipline

Readcerans are expected to undertake tasks earnestly and pursue goals with determination.

They prefer structure and uniformity to adaptive, nuanced approaches. It’s better to fall in line and shape yourself to the regimen (even if that requires breaking yourself in a few places) than to find your own way forward.

Vices

Pessimism

A life of grumbling and negativity is wasted. Readcerans have little patience for naysayers and believe they bring misery upon themselves.

Doubt

Readcerans believe that if you lack a solid foundation, you will never be able to make any meaningful progress in your life. Doubt is what prevents people from moving forward and should be eliminated from your life and mind. Doubting the business of others (especially when it doesn’t concern you) is even more destructive. Readcerans equate doubt with negativity and believe negativity causes bad things to happen.

Deviance

In other cultures, being different carries its own set of stigma, but deviance—in personal appearance, sexuality, life choices—is especially frowned upon in Readceras. The conservatism of the culture is not typically codified in laws, but social shunning can be an extremely powerful form of condemnation.

Rebelliousness

It’s bad enough to be deviant in one’s own life, but to inspire rebellion in others is even worse. Responses to rebelliousness go beyond social shunning and may be resolved by mob justice. Despite this general attitude, the irony of Waidwen’s rise to power is lost on most Readcerans.

Aimlessness

In Readceran society, people have roles to fill and things to do in those roles. Aimless individuals break down social order and slow the progress of their communities. They are also a burden to their friends and families.

The Vailian Republics

(VAY-lee-abn, Vailian [nonstandard “ai” pronunciation])

- **ADJECTIVE:** Vailian
- **DEMONYM:** Vailian
- **LANGUAGE:** Vailian, a lot of Aedyran, many other languages in small amounts
- **POPULATION:** 2,250,000. 70% Resident, 30% Transient. 35% Urban, 65% Rural. Ocean Folk (55%), Mountain Dwarves (20%), Meadow Folk (10%), Island Aumaua (5%), Other (10%)
- **GOVERNMENT:** Confederation of sovereign republics. Each republic in the confederation is ruled by a duc or ducess. The duc is, in turn, elected by the aristocratic ruling councils of the individual republics, called the consuagli asegi (*kohn-SWAH-y lee ah-SAY-djah*, “councils of the siege,” Vailian).

The consuagli asegi have their historical basis in a council of prominent families that the feudal rulers of the Vailian Empire would call together if a fortified city were subjected to a siege. When the Grand Empire collapsed, the civilian administrators and aristocratic councils of Vailia’s colonial cities became the de facto rulers, later legitimized by the formation of the Confederation of Republics.

Though many powerful aristocratic families effectively have hereditary positions in their republics, that luxury largely depends on the wealth or military power of the family. A family that declines in power will typically be voted out of the ruling council if their fortunes do not improve in short order. The heritage of old families from the Grand Empire of Vailia is not given much weight, but old money dies hard, so the power brokers of the Vailian Republics are not entirely “self-made,” with many of them from former feudal families of means.

While all fourteen ducs of the confederation have voting rights on the songretta ducala (*sohn-GREY-tah doo-CAH-lah*, “ducal congress,” Vailian), five ducs are ducs bels (*dooks behlz*, “great ducs,” Vailian), representing the cuiteti beli (*kwee-TAY-tee BEH-lee*, “great cities,” Vailian), each possessing three votes to the single votes of the ducs panits (*dookz PAH-neetz*, “small ducs,” Vailian).

In practice, this means that four ducs bels and one duc panit form a majority. Four ducs bels opposed by the remaining duc bel and all ducs panits results in a deadlock. All ducs bels united can easily overrule even unanimous opposition by the ducs panits.

The confederation does little to regulate the day-to-day operations of their member republics, but they do govern aspects of international trade. The confederation also prepares and provides for the common defense of the republics. The regulation of social activity, internal trade, and local laws is left entirely to an individual duc or ducess and his or her consuagli asegi. Similarly, laws governing how a duc or ducess is elected, for how long he or she must serve, etc., are left to the consuagli asegi.

Most votes in the songretta ducala require simple majorities. Admitting new republics, casting out rogue republics, declarations of war, and other major actions require a two-thirds majority. Twice in the history of the confederation has the songretta ducala voted to cast out a rogue republic, declared war on it, retaken it, and subsequently “supervised” the formation of a new consuagli asegi. As a consequence, the consuagli asegi try not to defy the will of the confederation outside of understood boundaries.

- **PROMINENT FAITHS:** Ondra, Hylea, Abydon, Magran

- **PRODUCTS:** Iron, copper, silver, glassworks, ships, spices, clocks, and astronomical equipment

Most Vailians come from the Vailian Republics, a federation of independent city-states comprising former colonies from the Grand Empire of Vailia. They are a powerful mercantile force in the Southern Hemisphere, trading with more partners than any other nation or empire. Five cities are considered “grand” republics and have greater voting power



in their electoral council: Spirento, Ancenze, Selona, Ozia, and Revua. The federation is widely known for its access to most major commodities in the world, including slaves, and for its habit of impressing (abducting) foreigners into service on their naval vessels. Vailians pride themselves on their well-made and intricately decorated clothing, often made with rare materials and dyes to which they have easy access.

Vailian culture is concerned with the practical matters of the world as well as their own particular standards of (prescriptivist, classist, and ultimately elitist) behavior. They view each other as ambassadors to the world and don't like the thought that someone *wouldn't* envy the Vailian position in it.

Virtues

Success

Nothing is as virtuous to the Vailians as success. Even in the absence of all other Vailian virtues, success finds approval. Though minor failures or social infractions may be noted during the pursuit of a goal, the ends truly justify the means in the minds of most Vailians.

Shrewdness

Acting quickly is not as valuable as acting correctly. Vailians appreciate measured, considered action. This can also be seen in their art and poetry, where works with expert precision and fantastic economy (strokes, lines, word choice) are revered.

Restraint

Vailians believe in personal restraint, patience, and delaying satisfaction. This applies to political interactions, social interactions, romantic interactions, and even how they eat. Reckless indulgence is frowned upon, though it should not be mistaken for prudishness. They simply believe that desire needs to "ripen" before it can be truly enjoyed. They also believe that restraint helps them overcome the natural emotional tendency to make rash decisions in the heat of the moment.

Wit

Similar to the Glanfathan respect of cleverness, but applied to criticism and satire. Ridicule (and flirting, and praise) is intended to be sharp and biting—and also to be exchanged. Foreigners are often appalled at how merciless Vailians can be toward each other—even dear friends—and still walk away on good terms.

Polymathism

Vailians believe that well-rounded people are the best people. They tend to brush aside the accomplishments of the highly specialized (in their view, obsessive) in favor of people who gain deep proficiency in a number of fields. They have a small measure of respect for dilettantes, but often view dabblers as pretenders.

Vices

Failure

Just as success is the greatest antidote to any Vailian problem, failure is the greatest poison to any good Vailian reputation. People who fail in major ways are often hounded into exile, sometimes to another republic but often out of Vailian territories entirely. Naturally, memories are short if an expatriate manages to rectify their error or finds a way into new fortunes.

Bad Style

Vailians believe there is a correct way to do anything: dressing, walking, speaking, eating, courting lovers, etc. Within their own society, they watch and correct each other constantly on perceived failings—failings so minor that outsiders would probably never register them. They don't bother to critique outsiders (to their face) because they generally believe foreigners are hopeless.

Bluntness

Due to their love of wit and slow approach to interactions, Vailians frown at bluntness. Naked discussion of amounts of money during negotiations, head-on, "witless" (even if accurate) criticism, or hasty displays of hatred (or love) are viewed with contempt.

Dullness

Hand in hand with bad style, Vailians dislike the dull or mundane. Even an ordinary occasion or object can be made more enjoyable with a modicum of creativity. Vailians believe that active and creative minds are sharp minds. They also think that if someone fails to deliver "flavor" or "attitude" to his or her audience, they're just being inconsiderate. Serving the same dish day after day: dull. Wearing the same outfit that you've worn before: dull. Visiting the same locale you have before: dull. Vailians appreciate new experiences and surprises and celebrate the people who give them those things.

Mercilessness

Mercy in itself is not celebrated, but it is expected if the cost is not significant to the person granting it. Vailians are hard traders and fierce combatants, but they have some implicit boundaries in circumstances where advantage is overwhelming. Victory can be humbling or fatal to the losers, but should not be cruel or pitiless. People who make a habit of savagery, exceptional cruelty, or worse still, outright sadism, are viewed with extreme negativity.

The Aedyran Empire

(AH/EH-deer, Aedyran)

- **ADJECTIVE:** Aedyran
- **DEMONYM:** Aedyran
- **LANGUAGE:** Aedyran, some Hylspeak, a little Vailian
- **POPULATION:** 13,600,000. 90% Resident, 10% Transient. 30% Urban, 70% Rural. Meadow Folk (40%), Wood Elves (30%), Coastal Aumaua (10%), Ocean Folk (5%), Other (15%).
- **GOVERNMENT:** Hereditary monarchy, nominally a joint monarchy between the human Aedyran fercönyng (*FAYR-cö-ning*, "first king") or mecwyn (*MAY-queen*, shortened from *héamecwyn*, *HAY-ah-may-queen*, "illustrious queen") and the elven Kulklin imperial consort, but dominantly ruled by the fercönyng or mecwyn.

The fercönyng or mecwyn is advised by his or her gréfs (*grayvs*, "dukes," Aedyran) and erls palatine ("of the palace," like the Dyrwoodan "duc," both Vailian terms adopted in Aedyr).

The fercönyng's power is symbolized (and

infrequently manifested) by the Ine Gyrd (*IH-nah geerd*, "pearl scepter," Aedyran), a 500-year-old scepter topped by an ancient adra (Glanfathan shell material) ovoid believed to hold the souls of many early Aedyran chieftains.

When fercönyngs and mecwyns are approaching death, they do everything they can to die in the Ine Sychrúa (*IH-nah SEEK-throo-ah*, "pearl sepulchers," Aedyran), a circle of huge standing adra stones the Aedyrans discovered 800 years ago. Those who die in the circle do not pass on to the other side, but are bound into the stones and can collectively, often in cryptic or confused ways, communicate to living beings in their midst (typically only the fercönyng or mecwyn).

• **PROMINENT FAITHS:** Woedica, Hylea, Berath (Gaun)

• **PRODUCTS:** Iron, fine steel, cotton, dyes, lumber (a major export of many varieties), spices

The Aedyran Empire comprises people from its expansive settlement of the western continent and its former colonies, Dyrwood and Readceras. Aedyr literally translates as "many deer," but means "people of the deer," referring to a 2,500-year-old tribe that became a kingdom 600 years ago. It merged with the elven kingdom of Kulklin in 2399 AI. Among the Aedyrans, there is no significant cultural divide between humans and elves. Because of their close contact, and integration in spite of physiological differences (such as longer elven lifespans), their culture and legal system have developed a variety of unique concepts such as the haemneg, or ceremonial marriage. Ethnic Aedyrans (mostly humans and elves) have fair skin and a variety of hair and eye colors, with blue and green being common. Among other cultures, Aedyran clothing is known for being relatively simple in construction and often using large, colorful striped or checkered patterns for accents.

Aedyran culture has a longer continuous history than any of the other prominent modern cultures, going back several thousand years. It is the most tradition-oriented and high-minded culture, often emphasizing

abstract principles that have attained tremendous weight in the collective social unconscious.

Virtues

Duty

Aedyrans believe that a sense of purpose and duty gives their society strength. In their heavily feudal structure, every citizen has a role to play in service to the citizens around them. Though stratified and hierarchical, their beliefs also at least pay lip service to the idea that it works “both ways,” i.e., commoners owe the fruits of their labor to their lords, and their lords owe them physical protection and security. Knowing one’s place and fulfilling one’s duties are of great importance.

Efficiency

Something done well is worth little if it is done inefficiently. Aedyrans strive to do everything as efficiently as possible, from household tasks to maintaining the provisions of a marching army to carrying out executions.

Loyalty

Loyalty has high value to Aedyrans and is strongly tied to duty. Loyalty extends to country, family, comrades-in-arms, and even to long-term business partners. In some cases, loyalty may conflict with duty. In such cases, duty typically carries the heavier weight of influence.

Modesty

It is uncommon for Aedyrans to celebrate their personal accomplishments. When others champion their success, Aedyrans commonly play it down, discourage continued aggrandizing of their reputation, or counter by elevating the accomplishments of others.

Purity

Broadly speaking, Aedyrans value purity: pure hearts, pure action, pure materials, and pure intentions. Virginity has value among Aedyrans (it is not viewed with much importance by other cultures), as does a pure reputation. In the Vailian Republics, success

can wash away all sins, but that isn’t how it works among the Aedyrans. Redemption is hard to come by in Aedyre society, which is one of the reasons why the Eothasian faith became popular among Readceran immigrants.

Vices

Inconstancy

Aedyrans do not look fondly on people who waver in their support of others, vacillate between opinions and stances, or generally show themselves to be of a mercurial nature. This applies to relationships and stances of all kinds. The Aedyran respect for duty and hatred of inconstancy, combined with common infidelity, eventually resulted in the creation of haemneg (ceremonial marriages) between humans and elves.

Sloth

Laziness is deplorable at all stations in life. Even the young and the old are expected to occupy their time with productive activity unless infirmity prevents it. The “idle rich” are viewed with contempt by Aedyrans.

Sloppiness

It is not enough to do a job well and quickly. It must also be done in a clean, tidy fashion—figuratively or literally. Aedyrans do not like loose ends, waste, or unfinished elements. Their artwork, food, clothing, and homes reflect a preoccupation with order and attention to detail.

Impunctuality

Punctuality is not, in itself, admirable, but it is behavior that everyone is expected to exhibit. A lack of punctuality, to an Aedyran, indicates a lack of respect for other parties, a lack of seriousness, and general unreliability. Aedyrans believe that if you can’t even keep an appointment, you have little hope of following through on anything else.



Mixing Work and Leisure

Aedyrans have a peculiar cultural insistence on separating work time from leisure time. Discussing personal matters or being leisurely at work is viewed with contempt. Conversely, discussing work when at home or in the company of others is generally not welcome. Obviously, this sort of overlap commonly arises, so Aedyrans have a variety of cultural mores and special times that allow people to find permission or circumstances that allow them to bridge the gap. People who don't follow those courtesies (typically foreigners) are considered rude or thoughtless.



OTHER REGIONS

Old Vailia

Old Vailia was once the capital of the Vailian Empire, a sprawling and culturally rich colonial force that reached across the sea prior to the Aedyran expansion. They settled far north and south of Eir Glanfath, avoiding any turmoil with the local populace and completely overlooking the wealth of ancient ruins. To the north, the failure of their dye-producing vorlas plants made way for the Aedyrans to recolonize Readceras. To the south, their former territories in the Vailian Republics thrive in a more farsighted, mercantile culture.

The Vailian spirit is still strong in spite of their setbacks. They maintain a sense of dogged cultural pride, and their people share an affinity for pulling themselves back to the top one rung of the ladder at a time. Old hopes of regaining their foothold in the Eastern Reach are very much alive, though they've learned from experience that grabbing a colony is easier than keeping one.

Deadfire Archipelago

This southern region is still a frontier in many respects. Aumaua settlements and pirate-infested islands are often as inaccessible as they are lawless. Those who call the Deadfire home are necessarily hardened survivors, accustomed to extreme climates and cultural variation.

Boreal dwarves, aumaua, and a mixed variety of other races populate the islands in unknowable masses.

Many consider the Deadfire the last frontier on Eora, since the waters beyond swarm with deadly monsters that have halted even the most determined expeditions.

The Great Kingdom of Rauatai

A multitude of cultures have divided up the northeastern continent over the centuries. The richest regions in the western-facing gulf are dominated by the aumaua nation of Rauatai. Mercantile colonies along the shores are young compared to other settlements. Their inexperience is counterbalanced by a firm establishment in the region and a lack of the inner chaos that plagues their neighbors to the south. Turmoil from coastal storms is at times a significant concern, but the external threat only serves to keep the tightly knit communities dependent upon each other for survival.

The Living Lands

The large mountainous island far to the north of the Aedyran Empire is a diversely-populated, meteorologically variable region. Most permanent dwellers settle in the southern mountain ranges, where valley basins offer unique opportunities for farming and exploration. The Living Lands get their name from the fertility of soil and abundant growth of strange plants and animals in the seemingly endless valleys that span the island's interior. Eccentric locals boast that they come from the place where "anything grows." Less is known about the isolated settlements to the cold north, where eccentricity is rumored to go further than normal.

The Ixamitl Plains

Though the plains lie to the northeast of Eir Glanfath, the mixture of humans and orlans have never sought to expand into their neighboring territory. The success of crops and sense of distance from "southern concerns" make the natives less imperialistic and more introspective. The Ixamitl cultures are some of

the oldest in the world for a good reason: they know better than to overextend their reach, and others know better than to cross them. Though all cultures have their own forms of philosophy, the Ixamitl are widely respected for their long tradition of intellectual pursuits. Philosophers are a special class of citizen in Ixamitl and receive tremendous respect from the communities where they live.

The White That Wends

This infertile expanse of cracked and shifting ice is home to the largest known settlement of pale elves in the world. Outcasts, adventurers, and explorers from other parts combine their resources to survive—or raid smaller settlements as needed. Survival across the Wend is dependent upon harnessing nontraditional hunting methods better suited to open plains and using a lack of visibility to one's advantage.

Sailing expeditions once hugged the Wend's northern coast with hopes of charting a passage east. Too many ships spent seasons moored inland, only to be torn apart by unpredictable ice floes. Most explorers grudgingly decided that braving the Wend was no safer than braving the pirates and sea monsters of Deadfire. At least one group of Aedyrans never returned after their vessel froze in a developing ice field miles from shore. Whether they made peaceful contact with the Glamfellen, or succumbed to hazards of the environment, is unknown.

The Tribes of Eir Glanfath

(AY-er GLAHN-fath, Glanfathan)

• ADJECTIVE: Glanfathan

• DEMONYM: Glanfathan

• LANGUAGE: Glanfathan, some Aedyrans

• POPULATION: 750,000. 65% Resident, 35% Transient. 0% Urban, 100% Rural (no communities over 10,000 inhabitants). Wood Elves (40%), Hearth Orlans (20%), Wild Orlans (25%), Meadow Folk (10%), Other (5%)

• GOVERNMENT: Glanfathan society is organized under six tribes, each headed by an anamfath (*AH-nahm-fath*, "soul prince," Glanfathan) who is spiritually descended from other anamfatha, a title bestowed by specialized ciphers with the

wisdom and experience to judge a potential leader by their soul essence. Tribes also have councils of riow (*REE-ow*, "wise ones," Glanfathan [sing. *ri*, *ree*]) of varying sizes who advise the anamfath. The six tribes do not have a central authority, but the anamfath meet regularly to discuss tribal issues or problems that affect all of Eir Glanfath.

• PROMINENT FAITHS: Galawain, Rymrgand, Hylea, Berath

• PRODUCTS: Gal glas (*gahl glahs*, "green thorn," Glanfathan) timber, Glanfathan deer hide, gold, adra shell (the odd shell material found in Engwithan ruins), rare fungi

Eir Glanfath is the contemporary name natives give to the lands spanned by the entire forest southeast of the Bael River. Centuries before the Glanfathans arrived at this location, the area was ruled by a lost people called the Engwithans (*ehn-GWIH-thans*). Though the Engwithans were not technologically advanced compared to contemporary civilizations, they had accomplished a number of architectural and astronomical feats that explorers and scholars still struggle to understand. Whatever the extent of the Engwithan nation was, the Engwithans themselves seemingly abandoned it prior to the arrival of the Glanfathans. In Glanfathan myths and legends, a select number of Engwithans guided the early Glanfathan tribes into their vacant kingdom and commanded them to make it their home. The price for this generosity was a pledge to protect the Engwithan ruins forever—and never trespass or allow others to do so.

The Glanfathan elves and orlans in the forest live in seminomadic tribes, often with permanent Glanfathan buildings standing on top of or next to Engwithan structures. Engwithan ruins and adra pillars (also associated with the Engwithans) are not fully understood by anyone, and early misinterpretations over their significance by colonists resulted in two small-scale conflicts: the Broken Stone War and the



War of Black Trees, the latter of which ended with a fire that consumed a vast section of Dyrwood.

Glanfathan culture is rooted in the practical needs of their communities. Because their communities have much less class stratification and physical infrastructure than Vailian, Aedyran, or Dyrwoodan culture, Glanfathans are not caught up in hierarchical relationships or abstract social concepts.

Technology

Glanfathan technology incorporates wood and stone in ambitious ways. Most of their structures are wooden and thatch roofed, with stone tiles or cedar shingles reserved for buildings of importance.

Warriors dedicate no lack of attention to maintaining weapons of old, which is why many of them still carry March or even Battery steel. Such resources were originally acquired through trade with White March when the dwarves still resided there (though many Dyrwoodans accuse them of having looted the dwarven ruins).

Virtues

Cleverness

Glanfathans admire and revere clever people. This doesn't mean intelligent people, broadly, but quick-witted individuals or those who are capable of devising and executing complex plans—especially if they involve tricking others. Given two ways of doing something, Glanfathans will often favor the one that is more complex or intriguing.

Subterfuge

In Glanfathan culture, being able to conceal one's intentions or misdirect attention is considered skillful and worthy of respect. In line with their high regard for cleverness, Glanfathans most appreciate subterfuge when it is artful. A well-told bald-faced lie has its place, but is considered a bit pedestrian.

Frugality

Glanfathans live relatively austere lives, and pride themselves on needing little to survive

and thrive. The accumulation of property and wealth is not unheard of, but it's typically the miserly, hoarding kind. If someone loses a great deal of property or wealth, the "proper" response is to shrug it off as insignificant.

Communality

Communality is very important to Glanfathans, not just in the sense of a specific community, but in the sense of a shared welfare between all Glanfathans. Tribalism is widely discouraged, not just through social shaming but through rituals and traditions such as "trading" family members or jobs for significant periods of time. The entire concept of Dyrwoodan feuds is abhorrent to them.

Mathematic Aptitude

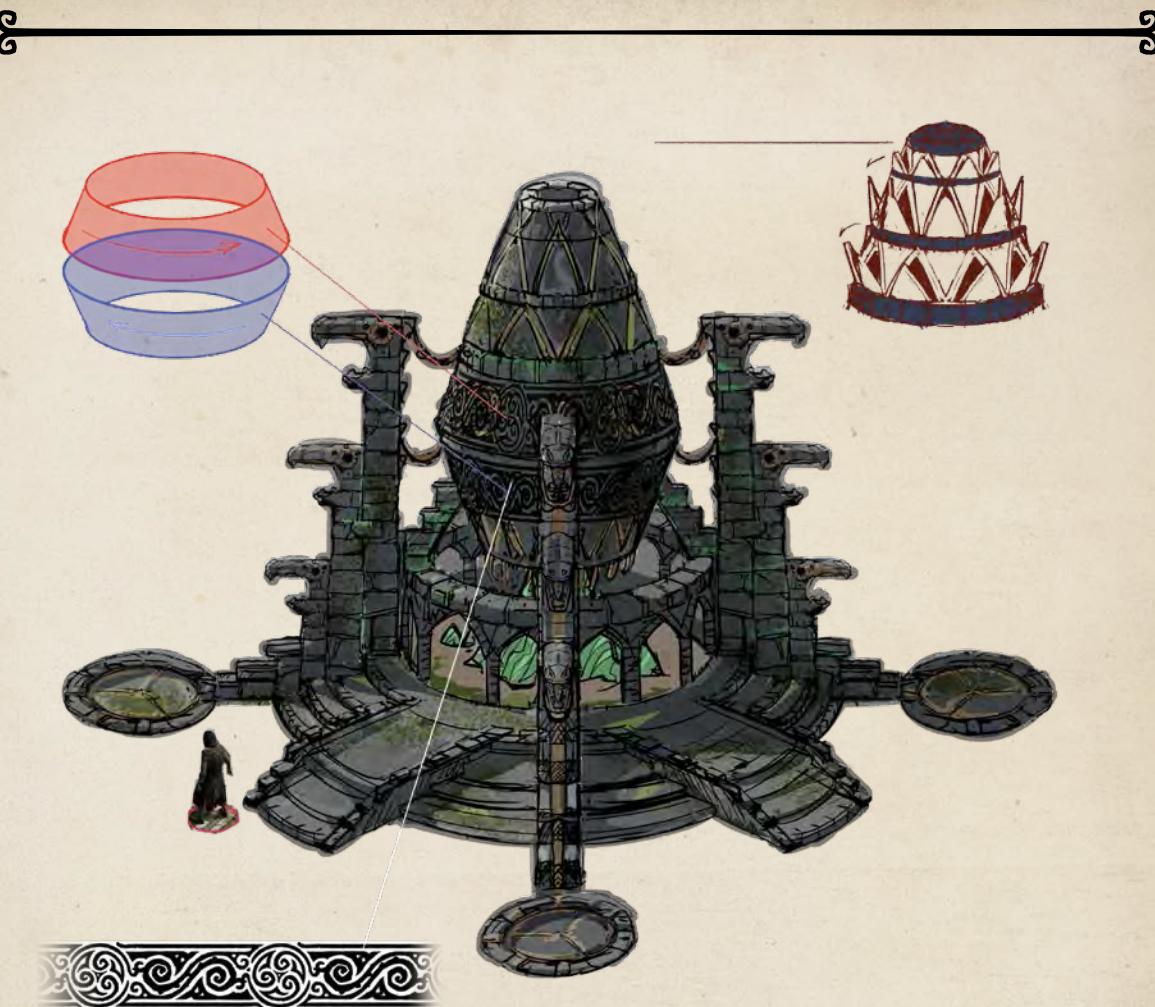
Something that has dazzled Dyrwoodans for generations is the Glanfathan love of mathematics and insistence on ensuring all Glanfathans are proficient in elementary mathematics like arithmetic, geometric logic, and algebra. Additionally, many Glanfathans have proficiency in calculus—often to the embarrassment of Dyrwoodans and Vailians, who previously believed they were pioneers in the field.

This passion for mathematics rarely manifests in any sort of civic project or invention, but is used to explain how the world works (or doesn't). Due to their practical mindset, Glanfathan mathematics is always rooted in observable real-world phenomena. Based on comparisons of contemporary Glanfathan equations and markings at Engwithan ruins, theorists speculate that the ancient Engwithans had a well-developed understanding of calculus and this likely contributed to their architectural capabilities.

Vices

Selfishness

Selfishness is a terrible vice among Glanfathans. Possessing great wealth (in any form) is fine, but monetary, spiritual, or emotional greed is bad. Glanfathans are expected to share with their communities without prompting or complaint.



Cowardice

Glanfathans of all ages and stations of life are expected to be brave—not in the sense of showing bravado, but in the sense that they should never show or give in to fear. Bravery is the standard expected of Glanfathans, which isn't to say that bravery is celebrated and cowardice is denounced. Glanfathans do not expect each other to be foolhardy or suicidally valiant, but they do expect that when the time comes to act, there will be little or no hesitation from others in their community.

Vanity

Glanfathans put only a modicum of effort into their personal appearance. That isn't to say that Glanfathans are unkempt beasts, but they view time-consuming grooming and primping rituals as foolish. People who clearly put a great deal of time into their

personal appearance are not taken seriously by Glanfathans.

Social Intoxication

Glanfathans believe there are times and places to be intoxicated, but “out in public” is not one of them. Glanfathans who visit Dyrwoodan communities are often dismayed by taverns or public celebrations involving alcohol or other drugs. Reactions to intoxicated individuals range from pity to disgust, though hostility is uncommon.

Token Gestures

In Glanfathan communities, an action is only worth what it accomplishes. Deeds are measured by their results. Apologies must contain remedy; words alone are meaningless. Symbolic gestures, empty talk, and hollow courtesy are exceptionally insulting to Glanfathans.

Twin Elms

This city of Glanfathan tribes was established between a pair of ancient elm trees, a location chosen for its proximity to the gods of Eora. Oldest among its structures is a stone tower known as Teir Evron (the Hall of Stars). The pinnacle of the tower is used for astrology and divine communication. Reminiscent of adra stones, the elm trees exhibit a tendency toward attracting souls that are “twinned” in some way, whether they were once halves of the same whole or interacted in some past of which the mortals are unaware. A pair of delemgan sisters attend to the trees in a vigil that predates the city itself. Twin Elms is also built around a major Engwithian ruin, which has not been plundered by adventurers.

The Six Tribes

Six major Glanfathan tribes are responsible for governing the city.

•Keepers of the Stone

The Keepers consider themselves the oldest tribe of Glanfathans, claiming also to be the first to make contact with the Engwithans. To this day they guard an adra stone remembered as a token of friendship gifted from their patrons. As such, they ascribe a great deal of importance to historical record and documentation. These claims are contested, but lack any proof to support a counterpoint. The Keepers have passed down the oldest stories of their culture, including accounts of the original seafaring expedition that landed them on Eir Glanfath long ago.

Even though their numbers are geographically spread out, Keepers marry within their tribe and show reluctance to engage with outsiders under any circumstances.

•Stone Bramble

Perhaps the most implacable and intimidating of the Glanfathan tribes, the Stone Bramble hail from White March, naming themselves after a hardy bush that grows in the mountains. They see tribalism as a

formality that keeps fighters and warlords in check. Any further use for society is an indulgence they have no wish to comprehend. In spite of their harsh outlook and the harsher land they settle, they have an inflated sense of self-importance in relation to the rest of the world. Their histories conflict with the Keepers’ in that they believe themselves favored by the Engwithans.

THE ELVES APPROACHED US AFTER SUNRISE.

I suspect we only saw them because they allowed us to, with the endless whiteout blanketing them in camouflage. The lookout noticed a set of pale eyes hovering in space. He described a figure growing in definition, flowing hair, and armor like glacial shards. Thinking the warrior a mirage of the Pallid Knight, he fled to the lower decks and prayed until the ship’s cook roused him and took his story.

A hundred figures have joined the warrior on the ice below. They seem to understand our calls, but I find no hope in their reluctance to answer. I don’t think many of them have seen a ship like ours before. The captain is forming a liaison party to meet these icelings face to face and show them that we’re just people in need of food, warmth, and a better home than our shattered vessel.

I can spot a dozen of them from my porthole. How tall they stand. How motionless. If this is the Glamellen’s welcome, then the cold truly suits them.

—Ship’s log from the Halcyon Widow, last penned by First Mate Haedrith Galyon (salvaged on the centennial of the expedition’s disappearance)

•Fisher Crane

In many ways, the Fisher Crane are the most overlooked and underestimated Glanfathan tribe—which is very likely their objective. Named after the bird who stalks with motionless patience, the Fisher Crane have a knack for subtlety when it comes to their cleverness. Outsiders (even among the Glanfathans) see the tribe skulking among bogs or half-sunken ruins and think the hermit-like figures as soft as the moss decorating their armor.



Outward aggression is rare, but not for lack of skill. Fisher Crane warriors are more apt to sabotage siege weaponry or stage elaborate ambushes than engage in open combat. Some of their oldest tales speak of ancient battles where the other side never knew their enemy.

They guard Engwithan ruins that are mostly submerged in swamps, or so overgrown by local flora that other tribes have lost track of their location. Though the Fisher Crane make fewer claims about their tribe's history, it's likely that they keep more of it a secret than they let on.

• Three-Tusk Stelgaer

While the Stone Bramble may be the most intimidating tribe, the Three-Tusk Stelgaer are the deadliest. Their warriors ride giant stelgaer cats into battle. This is a testament to their feral nature, as the cats will brutally kill any other Glanfathan within reach of their lethal

claws. During the major conflicts with Dyrwood, the Stelgaer were the primary aggressors who punished colonists for infractions on Engwithan ruins. Their brutality surprised the other tribes, but their fearlessness and commitment won them a great deal of support.

During the War of Black Trees, a split formed in the Stelgaer ranks. Some fighters wanted to dig in and battle Aedyran forces to the death, while others fled to the relative safety of Eir Glanfath. Those who fled ultimately joined other tribes, leaving the Stelgaer in the hands of its wildest and most chaotic fighters. These days, they are grudgingly respected by the rest of the Glanfathan tribes, and feared by Dyrwoodans who travel off of the established roads.

• The Guided Compass

Although the Guided Compass are known for their accepting and pacifistic nature, they are nevertheless viewed as



the eccentric upstarts in Glanfathan society. Some of this can be attributed to their being a relatively young tribe. Cut off from a sense of greater history or belonging, the Guided Compass take a more objective view of their place in Eir Glanfath, as opposed to falling back on tradition.

The tribe fought in none of the Dyrwoodan conflicts. Accepting early on that the Aedyrans had arrived to stay, the Guided Compass even theorized that the Dyrwoodan colony might prove a new ally in the protection of sacred sites. Their lack of involvement in the war earned them the mocking epithet of the "Broken Compass" in Glanfathan circles. While their alliance (which some would call complacency) with Dyrwood has yet

to benefit in the ways they imagine, the Guided Compass optimistically believe that they still have much to learn from the settlers.

•Twice-Split Arrows

This smaller tribe is technically an amalgamation of the others, as it comprises the outcasts and hermits considered unwelcome. While their brethren view them as scavengers with no sense of heritage or history, the Twice-Split Arrows consider themselves dogged survivors who will ultimately outlast the downfall of greater powers, and grow stronger for their endurance. As opposed to having a structure of leadership set in stone, the tribe will follow whatever measures are most practical and ungrounded from meaningless tradition.

WE DIDN'T NOTICE THEM UNTIL A man-shaped patch of forest stepped into our path. Our guide halted and motioned for us to do the same. He gibbered out a greeting, but the bog-man was studying our party, not even listening. You couldn't tell where the moss ended and the hair began, but the fellow was clearly a specimen of physical strength. His eyes settled on me, perhaps arriving at the conclusion that a lone female among men was the elected leader. Then he inclined his head in the smallest gesture, and the forest around us shifted a step inward.

His people had surrounded us, and he wanted me to know it.

I stepped forward with my palms out in a defensive gesture. The bog-man watched me with a statue's detached interest. I handed him our tattered map from the case at my side, and uttered the Glanfathan word that vaguely translated to "Grower's Rest."

Without even consulting the map, he made a smoothed-over gesture with his hand and said in an even tone, "Gone. Buried by the Green."

Ah. I didn't have the heart to translate for my companions, but our guide knew enough of the

tongue to figure out that our expedition was at an end. There was always the possibility that the bog-man was lying for the protection of their site. Either way, we would never see it.

As the others hunkered down to discuss their next course of action, the tribal leader beckoned me closer. He said in a low tone, "Letters and numbers?"

In other words, was I educated? I told him yes.

He nodded, and two of the bog-men flanked me on either side. "For our young," he said. "Letters and numbers. The others may leave in peace."

The rest of my group couldn't comprehend the exchange that was taking place, but I readily agreed to the proposal. After all, studying the local tribe was my reason for enlisting in the first place. If they wanted to learn something from me, so much the better.

Together we vanished into the canopy of the Green, leaving my former companions baffled in our trackless wake. So began a very strange period of my life.

—One of the Cranes, by Odeyna Ridgewith







The background of the image is a painting of a river scene. In the foreground, there are several traditional wooden boats, some with thatched roofs. A large, ornate wooden structure, possibly a bridge or a dock, extends from the right side of the frame into the water. The water is calm with some ripples. In the distance, a bridge with multiple arches spans the river under a cloudy sky.

CHAPTER 6

HISTORY OF THE EASTERN REACH





PRECOLONIAL HISTORY

Many events prior to the formation of Aedyr are topics of speculation. A few names and landmarks have endured, but only enough to paint a frustratingly vague picture of what—and who—came before.

Over a millennium before the founding of the Aedyran Empire, Glanfathan tribes populated the region now known as Eir Glanfath. They migrated from their ancestral lands in the North for one of many possible reasons. Some legends speak of an ancient fear that drove them south. Others say that the elves followed a spiritual calling that led them to settle anew. Perhaps the biggest mystery is what possessed them to relocate as a cohesive whole, as opposed to individually as tribes. Scholars agree that the incentive must have been great. Whatever the reason, one name stands out from this time period with an undeniable sense of importance: *Engwith*.

The word has few linguistic roots that could associate it with a cultural or historical context. Glanfathan scholars once supposed that *Engwith* was the self-referential term for elves at the time. Those theories were challenged by the discovery of architectural evidence located among Eir Glanfath's ruins. Carved in shrines and bas-relief, the Engwithans are identified as categorically distinct from any single race or culture. Based on this knowledge, some have theorized that the Engwithans were a diverse subculture. How they developed and what they shared with elven tribes are not extensively known.

The ruins strewn across Eir Glanfath are largely Engwithan in origin. Native elves maintain that their culture has been seminomadic—their only permanent settlements intentionally adjacent to sacred sites—for millennia. They never approached the mastery of construction evident in those stone dungeons and temples. Glanfathans show reverence for the Engwithan sites that extends far beyond superstition, and is intrinsically tied to their elvish sense of self.

WE STOOD IN A CIRCLE AROUND THE pit. Someone had secured a makeshift rope-and-pulley harness to the nearby wall. All it lacked was an occupant. The lanterns were shuttered to hide us, but our eyes adjusted shortly after entering the old tomb. A dozen dark outlines, hardly recognizable as my old friends.

Halefar pulled out a bag of gambling beads and dumped them into his palm. Eleven white, one black. I couldn't even see the black one, but I knew it was there.

"We'll let fate decide who goes first," he said. The words were confident. His tone was not. He dumped them back into the bag and shook it three times, with a sound like finger bones rapping on a desk.

"A fortune under our feet, and we all turn craven," said one of the anonymous shapes.

"Not without good reason," said another. "We've made it as far as anyone who survived these ruins before turning back."

Turning back. The idea should never have been uttered, but now it echoed down the lightless hall.

"We know that some expeditions never returned," said Halefar. "We don't know that they descended into this pit."

The phantom smears of old footprints decorated the stone floor. In another time, another foolhardy group was having this conversation.

"Draw and be done with it already," I said. The others turned to me like I was mad. "What else is there to talk about?" Maybe I could have let the moment have its ceremony, but the thought of us standing around like directionless cattle betrayed even the appearance that we knew what we were doing. Even if it meant that one would be separated from the others, our camaraderie challenged for however many years or minutes we had yet to live, I wanted the thing behind us.

"Very well." He held the bag open for each of us in turn. I picked my stone last, and revealed it first.

Black.

As black and cold and lonely as it is down here.

—Journal found in Engwithan ruins



and belonging in their environment. As they demonstrated during the early settlement and subsequent conflicts with Dyrwood, trespass on Engwithan sites exceeds any standard definition of "taboo." Defiling sacred ground is enough to twist the disposition of a peace-loving Glanfathan tribe to murderous zealotry. Because these tensions so often led to conflict with the Glanfathans, much about the Engwithan culture may forever remain a mystery.

Before such exploration was formally outlawed, Aedyran treasure hunters and rogue animancers discreetly plundered Engwithan ruins. Since these searches were never sanctioned or regulated, it's assumed that many of their findings were "lost" and changed hands through unofficial channels. Wealthy collectors hold vaults full of priceless Engwithan artifacts that may never see archive or study.

The ruins themselves exhibit strange reactions to soul energy. From the spirit winds that some believe flow up from their depths to the vast machines of dead adra, it is clear that the Engwithans mastered some arts of soul-craft long before animancy flourished in the Dyrwood. Animantic scholars consider these ruins something of a shared dream, while practical animancers forge their own paths in institutes like the Brackenbury Sanitarium. There are many in Dyrwood, Aedyr, and Vailia alike who covet the opportunity to learn whatever those forbidden ruins can teach.



EARLY DWARVEN SETTLEMENTS

The history of dwarven settlement is fraught with trial and error, punctuated by surges of uncontrolled enthusiasm for development. It seems intrinsic to the nature of dwarves that they look beyond their borders and imagine wonders on the far side.

The dwarven kingdom of White March was located northeast of Eir Glanfath.



Comprising largely Vailian colonists, the area prospered because of the notorious steel forges at Durgan's Battery. Durgan steel is renowned worldwide as the best of its craft, and to this day remains highly valued by collectors and adventurers for its rarity and durability. Modern March steel is nearly indistinguishable, but any discerning smith will point out that it lacks an edge against the craft of its forebears.

When the dwarves of White March pushed their colonies deeper into the eastern continent, they overextended the limits of their reach. An aggressive ogre population led a war party against their settlement, which forced the dwarves back in dwindling numbers. Spurred by blood lust, the band of ogres tracked the refugees and fought their way into dwarven territory, conquering the once-mighty citadel.

The last of the kingdom dwarves made their way to the Pearl Coast, a collection of shoreline cities along the southwest of Eir Glanfath. There they lacked the fortification or numbers necessary to repel attacks by aggressive Glanfathan tribes and raiding pirates from the Deadfire Archipelago. It was simply a matter of time before an attack wiped them out entirely.

Failure of dwarven settlements on such a scale explains why dwarves are so evenly scattered around the world. In spite of their ravenous appetite for expansion, they never have a chance to settle for long before one force or another disperses them.

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AEDYRAN AND VAILIAN COLONIZATION

Dyrwood

Once the Aedyran Empire had accumulated the manpower and resources needed to settle a colony, they wasted no time in setting out for unfamiliar frontiers. Explorers ventured across the eastern sea in a pair of ships (*Clanna* and *Dyrla*, 2623 AI), bearing enough supplies to remain at their foreign destination indefinitely. When their navigational calculations determined that land should have been in sight, a fog of such thickness shrouded the vessels that no one above deck could see the ends of their pipes. A lookout in the *Clanna*'s crow's-nest reported glimpsing "a queer light," which he used to guide the expedition ashore. There were no lighthouses or signal fires on the beach. Some have theorized that the lookout spotted the ancient adra levees outside the future settlement of New Dunryd. Though considered apocryphal at best, the fable was popular during the Aedyran occupation of the continent.

After a few days spent unpacking essential supplies, a contingent of sailors returned to Aedyr on the *Dyrla* with news of their findings, leaving the rest to establish a permanent base camp. An unexpected storm drove the settlers inland. They sought shelter on the fringes of Engwithan ruins, where they recorded strange weather phenomena and "feelings most uncomfortable." They couldn't have known it at the time, but a small contingent of Glanfathans spied their infraction on sacred ground from the safety of the tree-tops. From that point forward, a pattern of trespass and reprisal would define Aedyran/

Glanfathan relations to come (see Conflicts in Dyrwood and Eir Glanfath).

In 2629 AI, regional tensions spurred the colony to improve their ruling hierarchy, and it became a duchy ruled by Gréf Edrang Hadret. A military tactician, Hadret was tasked with establishing a city to cement Aedyr's presence in the continent and repel Glanfathan forces. After almost thirty years of aggression, the gréf's son, Admeth, accepted his father's mantle and convinced his allies to adopt an objective of peace. As a means of growing his influence, Admeth transformed the former colony into a gréf palatine, and used his powers to effect changes that rankled the distant Aedyran emperor. The policies he exerted on Dyrwood would culminate in a lasting alliance with Glanfathan natives and the severing of all ties to the Aedyran Empire in 2672 AI (see The War of Defiance).

Admeth is remembered as a figurehead of perseverance for uniting Dyrwood and the Glanfathan tribes, and a paragon of independence for the structure of rulership he set in place that would last generations.

Readceras

While Dyrwood worked on resolving differences with the Glanfathans, Aedyr experienced its own troubles. An economically depressed population of Eothas worshipers grew increasingly agitated with their state of affairs. The emperor determined that a new colony represented the perfect opportunity to get them out from underfoot. He offered land grants and funds so generous that the Eothasians overlooked their poor treatment and chose to expatriate.

Aedyr made a second grab at becoming a colonial power in 2643 AI when they sent a batch of Eothasian colonists to settle the region north of Dyrwood. The colony served a number of functions: relocating the impoverished pilgrims to a land they could call their own, and taking over the cultivation of dye-producing vorlas plants. Vailia gave up on the latter prospect after their crops failed and



colonies revolted. The emperor expected that his second investment in the new world would profit better than his first.

As with the Dyrwoodan colony, events unraveled against Aedyr's intended design. The crop of vorlas failed them as well, pulling the economic rug out from under Readceran feet. Conditions in the farming colony degenerated even further when the Aedyran government held back on their promises to send resupply

ships. The minutes of a royal assemblage quoted one especially callous erl as saying, "If they won't grow vorlas, they can grow wheat." Tensions escalated to a breaking point when a farmer named Waidwen became possessed with the divine aspect of Eothas and dismantled the local authority (see *The Saint's War*). Once the godly avatar took charge, the colony broke the last of its imperial ties and became the Divine Kingdom of Readceras.

The eventual failure of the conflict left Readceras a modest refuge for devout Eothasians. Strictly imposed faith and discipline led to the country's reputation as a counterpoint to the progress and innovation of Dyrwood. Its people live in close-knit communities with no lack of oversight, their policies determined by societal and religious judgment as opposed to mortal law.

Vailian Republics

Vailians are fond of remarking that their empire was old when Aedyr was still young. The Grand Empire once spread across the globe in a collection of member states that prospered where so many independent colonies failed. While others struggled for survival or bickered over contested territory, Vailians passed the time developing art, aesthetics, and science in a sprawling cultural renaissance. Settlements and trade agreements in far-flung territories meant that the Grand Empire could access any resource or material known to the world.

As years went by, a number of factors contributed to Vailia's gradual decline. Emperors brought up without adversity grew complacent to the workings of their government. Ambitious schemers changed or challenged the laws of succession to suit their agendas. Vailia as a whole divided up into unique entities while no one seemed to take note of its steady transformation.

Prominent families and aristocratic councils already ruled Vailia's presence in the eastern continent. By the time the colonies declared their independence and formed a federation of city-states, the feudal structure to make a seamless transition away from their empire's control was already in place. Old power and family fortune still dominate the region, though experience has shown that complacency and a lack of focus are enough to unseat any power.



CONFLICTS IN DYRWOOD AND EIR GLANFATH

Nationalistic Glanfathans often say that the eastern continent has been at war ever since the first eastern foreigner spotted land. When distant powers were conquered or pacified, Dyrwood found new conflict in its neighbors, its people, and even its gods. A fable passed among the Glanfathans during the early colonization implied that the Aedyrans had killed all of their own people across the sea, and sought other shores to make sport of the living.

The Broken Stone War

Three years after the initial settlement of Dyrwood, farmers clearing a field for crops unknowingly destroyed a pillar of living adra that obstructed their path. That evening, Glanfathan raiders stormed the settlement and demanded the heads of the desecrators. A mixture of linguistic and cultural misunderstandings escalated the encounter far beyond its intended threat. Knowing nothing of adra's significance, the colony expressed ignorance over the perceived crime. Glanfathans took this to mean that the colony was protecting the guilty, supporting their desecration, or possibly both.

A reactionary slaughter broke out that lasted for several days. After the initial melee dispersed, Glanfathans waylaid colonists traveling between settlements and either hung them from trees or butchered them in adra circles. Sometimes they let the victims decide their means of execution. Bands of colonists attempted to find or capture natives and bring them to justice, but their enemies were adept at navigating the environment. Most of the Aedyre lynch mobs fell victim to the same fate as those they sought to avenge.

The Glanfathans appointed an orlan military leader named Regd to the status of



galven ("sparrow," a term for a Glanfathan war chief). Rêgd specialized in coordinating Glanfathan warriors and striking vital colonists who thought themselves unassailable. The chief's evident cunning forced the Aedyran emperor to recognize that his own forces were greener in experience, and no match for a decorated warlord. In order to regain the upper hand, he promoted Edrang Hadret—one of his accomplished erls—to gréf of Dyrwood.

Edrang's objective was to build New Dunryd, the capital city. The emperor worried that laborers and settlers would be especially vulnerable to attack during its construction. Considering what the Glanfathans already had inferred about Aedyran military tactics, it was the wrong time to put his fighters at such a disadvantage.

Edrang had studied Glanfathan combat, and used his conclusions to his advantage. He instructed the erls and thayns under his power to engage with the enemy in ways that went against their traditional military teaching. This made Edrang something of a controversial figure during his early rule. In spite of skepticism of his methods, the empire couldn't dispute his results. Perseverance built the city, and Edrang further eased tensions by forbidding the plunder of Engwithan ruins.

The War of Black Trees

Unfortunately, not everyone in the higher levels of Aedyran government consented to Edrang's edict. In addition to coveting the treasures of Engwithan ruins, the Dyrwoodan colony also retained Glanfathan slaves captured during the Broken Stone conflict. The possibility of war shifted to an inevitability in 2652 AI, when imperial agents went over Edrang's head and infiltrated forbidden sites across Eir Glanfath.

The Glanfathan reprisal struck on two fronts: a slave uprising within, and Galven Rêgd attacking from without. This time,

Rêgd anticipated the Aedyrans' strategic maneuvering and sought the help of delemgan, the nature spirits bound to trees and adra sites. He utilized (to devastating effect) the tactic of striking colonies and feigning retreat into deeper forests. There he baited colonial forces to follow, and instructed the delemgan that no Aedyran should escape with his life.

At this point, Edrang Hadret was too old to face his adversary. He passed the mantle of leadership to his son, Admeth, who had grown up with his father's war stories. Once he'd objectively assessed the enemy's way of thinking, Admeth arrived at a practical solution. At the tributary of the Isce Úar River, Admeth and his forces pretended to fall for the Glanfathan trap. Once the last of their enemies were in retreat, Admeth ignited the first of many fires. Hundreds of soldiers waited in safety for Glanfathans to either flee the burning forests or die in a horrific reversal of their own strategy. Dyrwoodan forces took Galven Rêgd prisoner, and Admeth's leadership ended the conflict ahead of anyone's expectations.

The Coopers' Rebellion

Admeth made numerous changes during his rule. After setting the groundwork for a dramatic cultural shift, he signed a treaty that would abolish slavery on the tenth anniversary of the War of Black Trees. He also released Galven Rêgd from captivity and further restricted the plunder of Engwithan ruins.

No one anticipated the policies would go unchallenged. Hundreds of coopers, who relied on slave labor for their trade, attempted a small revolt. Admeth's forces struck them down without hesitation. The haste and efficiency of the reprisal suggested that the young gréf did not intend on risking his hard-won stability over a relatively insignificant quarrel. He wanted to convey the government's commitment to peace. Propaganda spread by military forces even inflated the Coopers' Rebellion to make

it seem like a much larger conflict—an example made to anyone who thought to challenge Admeth's resolve.

The War of Defiance

The Aedyran emperor was unsatisfied with the profits of Dyrwood. Admeth made sure that New Dunryd was secure, yet his accomplishments meant nothing if the empire had no access to the region's true riches: the Engwithan ruins and the mysteries they held. Forming a secret alliance with Admeth's enemies in 2664 AI, the emperor once again broke the treaty to respect the ruins across Eir Glanfath.

Agents of the empire launched exploration parties in secret, which grew more brazen over time. Glanfathans discovered the infractions and struck back at rural communities. Their actions were seen as enforcing the treaty that once guaranteed peace in the region, rather than initiating a new conflict. Either way, the emperor had Admeth's attention.

Admeth and his new Glanfathan allies (including Galven Medhra, the elven woman who replaced Rêgd) uncovered the trespass and traced it back to the instigator. When agents once again attempted to infiltrate an Engwithan site, Dyrwoodan forces made sure that the emperor's allies never even crossed the threshold.

Responding in kind, Admeth collaborated with his trustworthy erls to declare independence from the Aedyran Empire. His argument won public admiration: that the emperor needlessly risked the lives of Dyrwoodan settlers to line the pockets of a few nobles across the sea. Rebel forces ousted anyone still loyal to Aedyr, confiscating fortunes to finance the war effort.

The emperor sent waves of soldiers and supplies to retake the former colony. He failed to account for how many Glanfathans were loyal to Admeth, as an accurate census of their numbers was never possible. He also didn't anticipate that the remaining erls still

sympathetic to his reign were already dead, their territories and resources now under the control of the rebellion.

One of many coastal battles claimed the life of Admeth Hadret, which only served to further unite Glanfathans and Dyrwoodans under a shared banner. As the emperor redoubled his invasion force, rebels feared that an incursion into New Dunryd would mean their end. Galven Medhra and her team of Glanfathan astrologers came up with a gambit that would hopefully turn the war in their favor. In remembrance of Admeth, the inspiration for their scheme originated in tactics employed during the War of Black Trees.

During the construction of New Dunryd, engineers discovered that a nearby wetland had been drained centuries prior to expand the inhabitable region and fortified with a series of dikes that kept the sea at bay, and decided to make it a major residential center. Since the land had ostensibly been reclaimed from the sea goddess Ondra, they called that district Ondra's Gift.

As the largest battle of the war breached the city walls, rebels held their position inland and baited Aedyran forces into storming the Gift. An imperial armada circling the bay lent their support with cannon fire. Many lives were lost holding the Aedyrans in that part of the city, but the battle's success or failure would determine the outcome of the war.

Then—just as the astrologers predicted—a full moon filled the sky. With it rose the Cawldha Dev (see Celestial Bodies), and a Lovers' Tide battered the coast with a ferocity never before witnessed. The violence of the ocean broke ships against the adra levee protecting New Dunryd. As the ancient fortification strained, seawater encroached on the districts occupied by Aedyran soldiers. Many drowned or were dragged under the waves. Their numbers weakened and naval support splintered, they fled the city, but not after sabotaging

the dike that held the fury of the sea at bay. An unstoppable force of water flooded the district, and Ondra took back her Gift. In honor of the war, the city has since been known as Defiance Bay.

The Aedyran emperor surveyed his losses and found he could no longer justify the war. He signed a treaty with Admeth's remaining erls, and the empire has remained bitterly distinct from the Free Palatiniate of Dyrwood ever since.

The Rebirth of Animancy

Free from the restrictions of Aedyr, scholars in Dyrwood sought to explore the long-forbidden art of animancy. Aspiring practitioners and philosophers gathered in academic circles to compare ideas. There was no definitive work on what animancy could do—its potential, restrictions, or risks. Dyrwood was already set on a trajectory of progress, eager to dispense with outdated traditions. Ambitious innovators dreamed of unlocking hidden reserves of strength or wisdom previously unavailable to them.

Using copper and adra fragments, a few animancers cobbled together rudimentary machines that exerted mixed influences on the soul. The cost and upkeep of these devices required patronage from wealthy families. Given the economic pressure faced by soulcrafters, their experiments were consigned to private estates instead of any institution of higher learning. Undoubtedly, this lack of oversight is what led to the Baelreach Accident.

In 2704 AI, an animancer working from the remote community north of Bael Marsh enlisted the help of a dozen local farmhands. He was attempting to bridge souls together for the purposes of long-range communication. Using the magnetic energy of what he dubbed a "spirit band," he instructed the circle of volunteers to back away from each other across an open field in order to test the limitations of the technology.

Early results were promising, as several of the volunteers were able to hear each other whisper across a mile-long diameter. An older woman among them complained of pressure building behind her eyes. Eventually the others felt it too. Before anyone thought to stop moving, the invisible tether binding them together snapped.

The volunteers dropped where they stood, dead but for their bodies that lived out of habit. Everyone for a hundred miles heard the bloodcurdling shriek of a dozen souls shattering at once. The experiment accomplished its goal from a morbid point of view. It didn't stop the country folk from assembling a mob and bringing justice to the animancer.

After the tragedy at Baelreach, soulcraft transformed from a fringe eccentricity to a public concern. No one—not even the government—knew enough about animancy to determine how it should be regulated. Research moved at a cautious pace, with fewer accidents in the subsequent years and little development to show for it. Animancers quietly relocated to Defiance Bay to work in back-alley slums.

Eventually, a small coterie of animancers arrived at the notion of unifying under a shared institute. When they presented their idea to the local government, no one could think of a reason to reject it. The Brackenbury Sanitarium opened in 2729 AI to further the study of soulcraft (see Animancy Research and Experimentation).

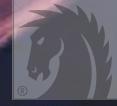
These days, animancy is still something of an unknown variable. Some have found the means to harness their souls—and the souls of others—to devastating effect. There is always a question of when the next Baelreach Accident might occur, and on what scale. Asked about the possibility during the sanitarium's groundbreaking ceremony, an erl answered, "If it must happen, better that we control where it happens."





CHAPTER 7

RECENT EVENTS



THE SAINT'S WAR

During the economic downturn at Readceras, a local farmer named Waidwen started to deliver speeches in the town square. Such activity would normally have been overlooked by the local government. In Waidwen's case, people listened to his ravings. No one could decide if he was brilliant or mad, but his words struck a chord in the hearts of the devout and those affected by the failure of the vorlas crop.

Waidwen took no credit for the content of his speeches. He claimed that Eothas visited him at night (taking the form of the Dawnstars) and imparted the divine message directly into his soul. According to Eothas, the people of Readceras were being punished for their lack of piety and the devotion they misplaced in the Aedyran governor.

Authorities at Readceras faced a difficult choice. If they imprisoned Waidwen for speaking treason, it could incite a rebellion. If they acted impartial, then antiestablishment notions and religious fervor threatened to infect the minds of the people. The only way to defeat Waidwen was to discredit him.

The town guard seized Waidwen in the middle of his most widely attended speech. Before a crowd representing the Eothasian populace, they erected a pillory and restrained the emaciated farmer. An enforcer read the list of Waidwen's crimes, which encompassed a broad range of shaming accusations:

The Crimes of Waidwen

- Animancy*
- Consorting with a cean gwla*
- Cruel statements to a child*
- Exhuming the dead*
- Impiety*
- Indiscretion with an animancer*
- Intoxication*
- Making lewd gestures at a woman*
- Public Indecency*
- Sabotage*
- Sedition*
- Venereal disease*

—Signed by Häthort Brettle, 2807 AI

A brief hearing followed proclamations of guilt. Waidwen was sentenced to thirty lashes. The crowd protested, but Waidwen placated them with his full consent to carry out the punishment. After the first five lashes, the enforcement officer hesitated and consulted with others on the dais. He later shared on record that a dim light was shining through the cuts across Waidwen's back.

The lashing continued, but Waidwen never screamed. Every bite of the whip opened another strip of light from the farmer's skin. When the anxious colonial secretary called for the punishment to stop prematurely, Waidwen demanded more. According to the Eothasians in attendance, his voice sounded "not his own." As the officer delivered the final lash, a brilliant, white light exploded from Waidwen's back and engulfed his head in a flaming crown. He stood up, the chains falling from his arms in molten pieces. With the full attention of the colony, the thing that was Waidwen finished his speech.

He called for the people to rise up—not as a mob, but as pilgrims tasked with delivering the bloody will of the divine. Waidwen and his new followers wrested control away from the colony within days, retitling it the Divine Kingdom of Readceras and seating Waidwen at its throne.

Waidwen and his army marched southwest, promising to "liberate" Dyrwood in a religious cleansing that would open their eyes to "the truth." Military forces gathered at New Heomar to assess the threat and meet Waidwen in the field of battle.

Dyrwoodan forces held their own in combat—even striking decisive victories in forest territories with the help of Glanfathans. The vanguard of Waidwen's army fared significantly better with "Saint Waidwen" at their head. Drawing on the power of Eothas, Waidwen conjured beams of light that incinerated his enemies by the hundreds. He took his share of damage during the campaign—an axe to his shoulder, a spear through his back—but he never fell in battle, and his wounds healed with inhuman speed.

Waidwen's army traveled west through Cold Morn unopposed. Pious and fearful leaders made no effort to stand in their way. Though lives were spared, Cold Morn's inaction cost them a debt in honor that has yet to be repaid. This early and effortless victory set a grim tone for Dyrwood's chances as Waidwen continued his march.

Word came to the Dyrwoodan defenders that Waidwen set his sights on Halgot Citadel. Resolved to end the war, a team of priests and engineers devised an explosive intended to obliterate the rogue deity. Followers of Magran contributed in the construction of an enormous bomb that became known as the Godhammer.

The Godhammer was the most potentially devastating force ever created by mortals. No one knew if it would work, much less if it was capable of defeating a god made flesh. It took the form of a metal sphere, twelve feet in diameter, full of volatile explosive reactants. Builders theorized that it would unleash more destruction than a fully-grown drake's breath by an exponential margin. What's more, the secrets of assembling the bomb were not held with any individual involved in its creation. The technology could not be reproduced, which meant that Dyrwood had one chance to save itself.

Days before Waidwen's arrival, forces at Halgot buried the Godhammer underneath Evon Dewr Bridge, excavating its foundation to fit the bomb's girth. Evon Dewr was the main northern access point to the fields outside of the citadel, but defenders needed to guarantee that Waidwen took the correct path. They spread propaganda boasting that Halgot would defeat Waidwen, and that his forces would never cross the bridge. Waidwen accepted their challenge.

A dozen Halgot soldiers staged a faux ambush on the bridge, baiting Waidwen and buying time for the bomb's fuse to reach its explosive core. Their sacrifice ensured that, when the Godhammer exploded, the Divine King would be standing at the right spot.

The blast went off at an unprecedented scale, sending up a cloud of ash and shaking the foundations of the citadel. It killed the last four of the Dyrwoodan defenders still alive, and over fifty Readceran soldiers. Saint Waidwen, however, was gone. His remains

THAT WRETCHED FARMER VISITED MY office again. Though he dressed in rags and smelled of burnt straw, he carried himself like a diplomat. I'll never understand where these Eothasians get their mettle. This was his third audience in as many days. Every time, he asked me the same three questions:

"Do you believe that light is the purest expression of the divine?"

I remember when a smile and a nod were enough to dismiss any spiritualist.

"Does your faith influence your rule?"

If not for his babbling, I would have taken him for a follower of Skaen. Why do the highborn have no god to protect them?

"How committed are you to the cause of righteousness?"

I should have him committed to a sanitarium. He looks like he's been plowing a midden.

After I politely brush off his questions, the farmer's practice has been to turn about and leave. This time he regarded me across a long silence. "You are beyond my help," he said. "The next time you see me, I won't be here."

His riddle puzzled me. I instructed the guards that he was no longer welcome at any municipal building until he cleaned himself up and got back to work.

I'll bet my title that we've seen the last of him.

—Journal of Häthort Brettle, secretary to the gréf of Readceras

were never found. Waidwen's soldiers continued the battle, but the unexpected loss of their god rattled morale to the point that their eventual surrender was assured.

After the last of Readceras's leaders signed an official peace agreement, the followers of Eothas were purged and left to their fallen theocracy. The Divine Kingdom shifted its title to "Penitential Regency," as many of its denizens regretted and repented the demise of Waidwen. Eothasian high priests have not

received answers to their prayers since the end of the Saint's War. They believe that the god's anger at the mortal world is to blame. Others believe that the Godhammer destroyed Eothas in their world and Beyond.

Since no evidence of Waidwen remained to prove his death, some theorize that Eothas physically drew his living avatar into the realm of the gods to escape destruction. Whether he was corporeally killed or spiritually disarmed, the end of the Saint's War forever revised how mortals think of the gods. In that respect, Waidwen's pilgrimage was a success.



I TOLD MY HUSBAND THAT IT WAS FEVER.

First my little Janert ate the rats in the barn. Then he went after the cat. He's getting so strong, our growing boy. He isn't himself these days, but I know that he's happy. I tell people that he's ill and needs his rest, and they nod with sympathy. Some wear an expression that I've only seen in the mirror, and I wonder how things are at home.

A scratching at the walls. More rats? Or did my Janert bite through his chains already?

The neighbors have taken to hanging wards on their doors and windows. A creature prowling the night, they said. I told them it must have wandered here from elsewhere.

Ah, but there's the plump healer I begged to visit. It's time that I introduced him to Janert.

—Journal of Drehya Kallister

WAIDWEN'S LEGACY

Many non-Eothasians thought (and hoped) that Waidwen's crusade had come to an end. Dyrwood had seen enough conflict and anticipated a time spent healing and rebuilding. What took place instead was a reprisal more agonizing and tragic than the Saint's War.

After Waidwen's demise, a generation of newborns came into the world without souls. The infants, dubbed "Hollowborn," displayed no sense of awareness whatsoever, a defect immediately apparent by the silence of their births.

Watchers and specialists from Brackenbury attended to many cases and confirmed that the afflicted were empty of spiritual essence. Since the infants would not accept nourishment from any source, they wasted away in their cribs while families stood aside powerless. Popular opinion attributed the epidemic to the vengeance of Eothas. Many of the light god's churches were burned, his followers hunted down, while others wrongly blamed mothers of the afflicted youths.

Solutions were explored (see Spiritual Prosthesis), but the people demanded a quick fix rather than chance further losses. A hasty study concluded that the souls of animals could be transplanted into human bodies with some risk. The theory went that since animal souls were lacking in defined personality, the child would grow into his or her soul over time and imprint over the blank slate. The machine that facilitated the process originated in Brackenbury, but replicas were mobilized on carts and circulated around the country. Most rural sufferers used farm animals or household pets for soul transplant, while others went trapping or fishing. Tens of thousands of infants received this treatment. The populace later dubbed this process the Salvation, and its children the Saved. Families of restored children looked forward to putting the unpleasant chapter behind them.

As the Saved children grew, it became increasingly apparent that they were different from their peers. Many of the Saved were socially maladjusted, with little regard for privacy or social norms. The remark whispered among the unaffected was that Saved children had "that Waidwen manner."

When the first of the Saved children grew to puberty, the curse of Waidwen's Legacy once more reared its head. An orlan girl came of age, and over a span of several weeks transformed into a ravenous monster (see Wicht). Her mouth split open to accommodate fangs that pushed through her gums, her skin took a ghastly pallor, and she skulked about with feral hunger. The family attempted to hide the abomination, until she butchered them all in their beds and escaped into the wilderness. Over subsequent

years, all of the Saved would undergo the horrific change. Many broken families were forced to put their young out of their misery. Others tearfully released them into the wild.

Animancers arrived at the conclusion that the wichts (Hylspeak for an uncontrollable child) were the result of incompatibility between the animal souls and changes in the children's bodies. Since this explanation came too late to help any of the former Saved, animancy subsequently suffered its most severe setback since the aftermath of the Baelreach Accident. Public outcry against soulcraft grew to a fervor, and in some instances animancers were dragged

from their homes and beaten or killed by vigilante mobs.

Animancers once again fled rural areas in shame, finding solace and anonymity in Defiance Bay. Others left to pursue their studies in the Vailian Republics, which boast a small but growing community of sympathetic scholars.

Wichts still roam freely by night, haunting graveyards and crossroads. Most of them prey on unwary travelers and the infirm. Others have meandered back to their former households. Dispensing with wichts is considered a terrible necessity, and not a matter of boast or pride.







CHAPTER 8

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS FACTIONS

A rich and colorful history has led to many eccentric groups growing in popularity over the years. Some of them developed out of necessity or struggle, while others are the product of like-minded individuals who noticed a gap in society's structure.

DEFIANCE BAY

This sprawling capital is the locus of trade, industry, and exploration for the entire country of Dyrwood. Nestled on the peninsula between the Isce Úar River and the sea, Defiance Bay is perfectly positioned to receive raw materials from Loghome and export crafts around the world. While the city excels at producing ships, textiles, arms, and armor, its unique source of lucre is the trade of Glanfathan artifacts. Commerce of this sort is frowned upon and largely consigned to black-market dealings, but is also inextricable from the Dyrwoodan sense of ambition and entitlement.

Formerly known as New Dunryd—the heart of Aedyr's eastern colony—Defiance Bay has endured a multitude of cultural shifts over the years. The rebellion destroyed most of the buildings and infrastructure, leaving much to be rebuilt in the aftermath of independence. The Brackenbury district survived the worst of the war. Any prerevolutionary charm it might have possessed is marred by a lack of upkeep.

Defiance Bay currently serves as the official seat of the Dyrwoodan leaders, who assume the titles of duc or ducess. Governance and public policy are responsibilities shared by the elected leader and the Old Families, a collection of noble houses of (mostly) Aedyran descent. Separated from their imperial origins, the Families maintain a reputation of impartiality and incorruptibility for the good of the nation. The current duc is Aevar Wolf-grin, a wily old nobleman originally from a frontier town.

The death of Duc Admeth Hadret left a gap in the leadership that would not be easily replaced. Before he went to his final

battle, he swore that his soul would fracture and be reborn in his subjects. The first of his spiritual scions was found in Raedric, a noble heir from Eina's Rest. After a brief conflict over the consolidation of power, Raedric took the ducal throne at Defiance Bay. He established a nontraditional law of succession to appease his detractors. The Woedican clergy selected candidates whose souls contained fragments of Duc Admeth's, and subjected them to an election. This practice still endures, though the preferential treatment given to aristocratic-soul inheritors puts the system's validity into question.

Anyone with an adventuring heart tends to find him or herself in Defiance Bay sooner or later, whether using it as the gateway to Engwithan ruins or settling to study with like-minded innovators. Expedition parties often set out with hopes of delving into Glanfathan sites, a practice largely responsible for the city's renaissance of animancy. Adventurers traditionally rally at Expedition Hall, where nobles and gamblers invest in the success of teams setting out for Eir Glanfath. Although the trespass of ancient ruins is a conflict of historic significance, the spirit of independence and progress in Defiance Bay trumps all misgivings.

The Dozens

The Dozens are a self-organized militia of Dyrwoodan nationalists. Their name and bylaws commemorate the sacrifice of the twelve soldiers who died on Evon Dewr Bridge during the last battle of the Saint's War. Their meeting halls are decorated with portraits of the twelve, scenes of combat with a tyrannical god of light, and devotional paintings of the Godhammer bomb. So fervently do they praise the success of the battle that they place blood (or soul) relatives of the original dozen at the highest levels of leadership. Maintaining extensive documents on the heritage of their "founders," they track the activity of descendants in

order to keep the thread of their patron and patroness soldiers in check. If any potential recruit expresses reluctance to join, the Dozens are not above using intimidation to force the matter.

Their guiding beliefs focus on cultural exclusivity and xenophobia, particularly when it comes to Readceras and the worship of Eothas. After the death of Saint Waidwen, belligerent groups of Dyrwoodans tracked down followers of Eothas and forced them

*Candle-worshipers be warned:
A light is easily spotted in the shadows.
We know where you are. You don't even know us.
No one is protecting you. We are legion.
You have a dead god. We have the dozens.*

—Pamphlet circulated around New Yarma

to flee north. Rural areas were especially prone to all manner of frontier justice. As the purge slowed in its momentum, the most ardent and invested mobs joined forces to continue the bloody work.

The more extremist members still advocate a war of reprisal against Readceras. On several occasions since the war, they've been known to drive outsiders from their protected communities using violence and coercion.

Though the actions of the Dozens are widely considered terrible expressions of vigilantism, it is suspected that they have a quiet majority of support in even the highest levels of Dyrwoodan government.

The Knights of the Crucible

"Knight" is arguably a misnomer for this motley band of Defiance Bay mercenaries. The faction employs anyone from street thugs to starchy veterans. Those who join their ranks must necessarily be hardened by years of battle. In this sense, the Knights are a fiercely practical meritocracy.

The coalition of fighting profiteers assembled during the War of Defiance, when fortune hunters and adventurers recognized

the chance to benefit from the conflict with Aedyr. They hired out their blacksmithing skills and fought in both minor and major skirmishes. Since then, the Knights have only grown in martial prowess as popularity swelled their ranks.

Because of their modest roots in blacksmithing, the Knights of the Crucible regard Abydon as their patron deity. Admiration of and kinship with the Arm of Magran reflect their values of hard work and self-improvement through labor. To a Knight, "talent" is not something found in a vacuum—it's the result of constant practice and rigorous training.

Those who keep close to Defiance Bay serve long-term contracts on the city watch, an elevated position coveted and vied for by other subgroups within the Knights.

In spite of their success, the Knights are deeply divided over their faction's commercial and philosophical goals. Whether they aspire to a traditional knighthood or the rough-and-tumble ways of the Dozens may depend entirely on which group collects the most coin.

Dunryd Row

Fifty years after the founding of Brackenbury Sanitarium, the Dyrwoodan government recognized another opportunity to utilize soulcraft to the country's benefit. Ambassadors from the animancy community visited Glanfathan tribes and consulted with their specialist "mind hunters," or ciphers. These figures had cultivated latent psychic abilities, which they used to identify dissenters in the tribal ranks or track elusive prey. Their unique skills were instrumental when Duc Admeth rooted out imperial agents from among his trusted allies. At first wary of sharing their practices, the Glanfathans eventually acknowledged the benefit of using animancy in tandem with their cipher abilities. The relationship progressed to the point that ciphers allowed their animancer

allies access to the Engwithan sites where they practiced and honed their abilities.

This cultural exchange program reached its apex in 2799 AI, when Lady Eydis Webb petitioned for the formation of a cipher secret police in Defiance Bay. She envisioned the group as a covert enforcement team under her direct command. Most wore no uniform and often communicated

HORROR AND HOPE IN THE STREETS OF DUNRYD

Last night, concerned citizens spotted a robed figure dragging an unconscious child into the back of a wagon. A foot chase ensued that quickly exhausted the followers. As the wagon sped down a distant alley, a tendril of purple light whipped from the nearby shadows and struck both driver and horses. As if hit by a bolt of lightning, the driver collapsed in an unconscious stupor. The horses slowed to a trot. Authorities in the city watch later took the blackguard—a rogue animancer wanted for foul experiments—into custody.

The source behind the arcane assistance that foiled the abduction has yet to reveal itself. Some recall witnessing similar phenomena stretching back to the Broken Stone War. Whoever intervened on the child's behalf is due public regard. Should anyone learn the identity of the secretive patron, please report the findings to the closest office of the Hand.

—Widely reproduced missive attributed to the Hand Occult found in many wealthy houses around Defiance Bay

using obscure codes. Lady Eydis specifically targeted eligible ciphers who looked ordinary and blended in with the crowd. By design, they operated beneath the attention of the government, the people, and even their fellow agents. Lady Eydis further utilized this information network to learn as much about developments in soulcraft as possible, most likely to serve her personal ambition. Among their other responsibilities, the team monitored the activity of questionable animancers. For this reason, the group was largely composed of Glanfathans, and utterly devoid of Aedyrans.

Once the public grew alert to the presence of the force in their midst, locals responded with paranoia and mistrust.

Outraged propaganda circulated in the streets, dubbing the mystery coalition as the “Dunryd Row,” named after the section of the city where they conducted their affairs. They currently operate out of a vine-shrouded house in the Brackenbury district, bringing their mental abilities to bear on the city’s ongoing protection.

House Doemenel

The Doemenels once counted themselves among Dyrwood’s wealthiest aristocratic families. When the War of Defiance began, they quietly kept their Aedyran alliances with hopes of enduring the conflict unscathed and richer for the effort. Unfortunately for the Doemenels, Duc Admeth’s supporters uncovered their treason and repurposed the lion’s share of their fortune to finance the rebellion. High-ranking members of the family grudgingly cooperated, and were allowed to keep the remains of their estate and dignity.

These days, the Doemenels are aristocrats only in the criminal underworld. The family of accomplished swindlers, thieves, assassins, and black-market traders are well connected and established across Defiance Bay. Keeping a strictly cloak-and-dagger level of involvement, the Doemenels nevertheless look forward to the day when they can elevate back to a semblance of their former glory.

The Society of the Talon

Generations ago, the oldest aristocratic families in Dyrwood formed the Society of the Talon as a hunting lodge. Only the brightest and most capable were invited to join at their headquarters in New Dunryd. Over drinks and hookahs, the group collectively discussed the direction of national politics. Then they adjourned to grandiose hunting expeditions, seeking the most exotic and dangerous creatures in the region. These outings grew notoriously overambitious, and the pursuit of stelgaer-cat hides or the

heads of eoten giants often proved too much for the untested nobles, though not for lack of spirit. Waning membership and the decline of its founding families have reduced the Society since the days of its inception.

Some years later, the discovery of dragons lurking in hidden places along Dyrwood's northern coast revived national enthusiasm for the Society. It became common practice for nobles to send their heirs and heiresses to the Society in hopes of making connections and instilling some grit after a lively hunt. Where the Society once dwindled for a lack of eligible members, all at once it exploded with the sons and daughters of too many households.

Ever since, the Society has prided itself on its vast repository of dragon lore—which is kept a secret from nonmembers. They consider themselves an elite force tasked with balancing the dragon population (though they hunt only juvenile drakes or wurms). In spite of its eccentricities, the Society of the Talon is considered one of the braver and most civic-minded groups in Dyrwood.

The Hand Occult

It is perhaps appropriate that the Hand's objective is cloaked in mystery, as the members of this order are followers of the god Wael. The Hand are primarily a coalition of scribes and writers who circulate information through popular books and periodicals—most notably *Almanac of the Eastern Reach—For Colonists, Explorers, and Curiosity-Seekers*. While they go to great lengths to distribute the written word from their publication houses, they put as much effort toward buying out or intimidating competitors into silence. Some rivals have even attributed the stifling of new printing technology to the intervention of the Hand.

Whether they seek to spread the written word from a controlled source, or disseminate misinformation, is not known. The most to be inferred of the Hand's motives is

that they seek to regulate the flow of knowledge, which makes them a powerful ally and a formidable foe.

The Hounds of Galawain

The Hounds are a quasi-religious order dedicated to the god of the hunt. Aside from their passion for stalking greater beasts, members of the group hire themselves

APETITIONER VISITED YESTERDAY WITH his story of hardship. A shopkeeper pushed out of his trade. By the way he clutched his cap over his heart and spoke his "milords," he put on all the airs of an honest man. Apparently his morality weren't enough to satisfy the tax man.

"When they saw the color of our coin, they took everything, milord. Everything."

I already knew his story, for it was a common one. Man makes a living. Bigger man wants a slice. Way of the world, as my grandfather learned. Pitiful enough that you would have to be a monster not to sympathize with him.

Except for one bit: if he found his way to my court, then he weren't such an honest man after all.

"You owned your shop," I said, "but the city owned you all along."

He agreed too quickly. I decided that I didn't like him. "And how do you think I can help you?"

"We can help each other, milord." He ticked off his fingers as he counted. "I have connections in the harbor that go back generations."

So do I, I didn't say. I mentally gave him one minute to tell me something interesting. Mother taught us not to play with our food at table. When your "table" is an upended fish crate under a sewer grating, propriety tends to fall by the wayside.

"I know which of the merchants are . . ." he attempted to appear hesitant. "Unprincipled."

So do I.

"I have access to goods you can't readily find, even in Defiance Bay."

So do I. To this I gestured that he continue.

"Powders. Herbs. Gadgets that the Brackenbury types would like to get their hands on." Then he really hesitated. "People."

It's amazing what you discover when you reduce a man to his component parts.



out as guides for wilderness expeditions. History has shown that seeking treasure in Engwithan ruins without the aid of a Hound will likely result in untimely death or disappearance. Consequently, a small contingent of Hounds can always be found in Expedition Hall (see Defiance Bay), making themselves available to adventurers wishing to contract the services of professionals.

In keeping with Galawain's proclivity for turnabout in the hunt, the Hounds most frequently target alpha predators or one-of-a-kind creatures spawned by the Father of Monsters. It generally follows that a hunt or

Dear Edrun,

I hope this letter finds you well. Unfortunately, I send it from a place of high dudgeon. Perhaps you can help put this old man's mind to rest.

When I placed my daughter in the care of the Talons, it was under the impression that she would receive some culture under the tutelage of New Dunryd's finest. Introductions, remedial sparring, and other manner of harmless activity. She is a sweet, modest thing, so I daresay I even hoped for an advantageous marriage to come of it. The last thing I expected was the pamphlet I received from an anonymous source. "Highborn Slays Local Wurm"? Please tell me this is a joke, Edrun. I assumed your lot had quieted down from all that nonsense—with more focus on the Society and less on the Talons. Was I wrong?

Then there was the artist's depiction of my daughter. Edrun, she looks like a beast of burden squeezed into an iron shell. What happened to her rosy disposition, or the hips destined to carry the heirs of my estate? What have you done with them? The girl I sent you wouldn't have been able to lift a warhammer, much less prop it over her shoulder like a wooden switch.

I know better than to demand her immediate return. That she hasn't posted a tear-stained appeal for freedom tells me more than I ever needed to know. Bear with me as I attempt to put the lord aside and think as the father.

Can I have your solemn vow that you'll do everything in your power to protect her? I've done my research—and for all I know it was from my very library that she got these wild notions. In spite of her apparent enthusiasm for the hunt, try to keep her away from the worst of those acid-spitting monstrosities that haunt my nightmares.

Your friend,
Lord Radford

mission must be of the utmost challenge—or utmost profit—to be worth their effort.

Joining the company requires that the initiate plumb the depths of the Dyrwoodan wilderness and hunt a sufficiently formidable creature (e.g., wolves, bears, great cats, or one of Galawain's unique creations). As the prey dies, the hunter performs a ritual devouring in order to absorb the creature's soul into him or herself, gaining a measure of its power and instinct.



GILDED VALE

This small hamlet north of the Pearlwood Gulf was once the locus of a sizable Eothasian community in Dyrwood. After the events of the Saint's War, the Vale went into decline and thinned as the minority religious group was pushed out. Lord Raedric VII rules there and works to ensure that the area flourishes in spite of its challenges. For years he has drawn in outsiders to settle the Vale's abandoned homesteads with promises of land and wealth. Many keep a cautious distance for fear of associating themselves with even a former Eothasian community.

The Ethik Nol

This ancient order of druids hails from the mountains of White March, with some of their numbers tracing their lineage back to the fallen settlement of dwarves. As opposed to adopting the ambition and treasure-hungry character of their brethren, the Ethik Nol are fiercely spiritual. They believe in a natural order based on survival, community, and especially sacrifice. These three philosophies have a way of intersecting in bloody and controversial ways.

An Ethik Nol need only look around to see the spiritual world. They value the interconnected balance of nature, and treat the cycle of life and death as essential to its upkeep. The trees are rooted in earth, the earth supports worms, and the worms die to feed the trees. This same perspective carries

over into their daily lives. It is common for devout members of the Ethik Nol to die in ritual sacrifice for the betterment of the community. Using chants and rituals altogether different than what people think of as animancy, the Ethik Nol are able to disperse the soul essence of dying individuals throughout the rest of the tribe. This is done to improve the tribe's good fortune during particularly nasty seasons, to improve the hunt, or to generally elevate their standing in times of decline. Under casual circumstances, they would sacrifice an animal or food-bearing plant instead.

To call the live sacrifices "willing" would marginalize the complexity of their role in society. The practice is an intrinsic part of survival and the Ethik Nol worldview. It is also brutal and often unjust in its calculation. Members of the tribe are not always selected for sacrifice based on their willingness, but a measure of whose spiritual essence can best serve the community. On more than one occasion, that honor has extended to someone who didn't wish to die. Cultural pressures and the weight of obligation present a heavy counterbalance to any misgivings.

The group has endured for centuries due in part to a precious resource they hoard, which is a magical war paint that grants the user a natural armor against arcane or physical attack. Since the paint is only cultivated from the spiritual runoff found in ritual sacrifice, it is only employed during battles of dire consequence.

Ovates of the Golden Grove

The Ovates are a druidic order operating out of the Glanfathan city of Twin Elms. They consider nature a source of spiritual inspiration, and wax poetic on the parallels between civilized life and the environmental patterns around them. In this, they represent something of a philosophical counterpoint to the Ethik Nol. While the Ovates look to nature's cycles and patterns for insight, the Ethik Nol actively mimic them to achieve a greater sense of belonging.

The Ovates are keen naturalists, specializing in herbal remedies that can soothe or cure any malady. Further adopting the perspective that nature can serve the greater world, they use forests and rivers as a gauge to predict greater events (e.g., drought, storms) before they happen. Although their sense of observation has led to world leaders seeking their advice, they don't consider their skills in any way prophetic. To an Ovate, the knack for predicting the future

. . . Furthermore, should the CLIENT suffer unexpected consequences in the aforementioned RUINS from the failure or success of the MISSION OBJECTIVE, they shall hold neither the CONTRACTED PARTY nor the party's association ("Hounds of Galawain") in any way responsible. This covers the following:

- Death*
- Dismemberment*
- Spiritual fracturing*
- Spiritual annihilation*
- Intrusion by a foreign spirit*
- Unexpected change of race, sex, or age*
- Spontaneous transportation/imprisonment*
- Imbalanced humors*
- Injuries taken in battle*
- Injuries taken from traps*
- Loss of memory*
- Disturbing thoughts*

Once signed, the provisions of this CONTRACT represent the entirety of an EXPEDITION, and further negotiation of its terms before or after the failure or success of the MISSION OBJECTIVE is prohibited.

—Excerpt from the Standard Eir Glanfath Expedition Contract

is accessible to anyone with sharp senses and the patience to open their minds to nature.

The Ovates and the Ethik Nol are competitors in the Twin Elms community. Although the practices of the Ethik Nol make for some controversy, their war paint is too valuable to risk falling into outside hands.





CHAPTER 9

LANGUAGES, TERMS, AND EXPRESSIONS





AEDYRAN

Aedyran is an evolved dialect of Eld Aedyran, and is most commonly used in the Free Palatinate of Dyrwood. Though the language was rooted in the eastern continent, the outward expansion of the Aedyran Empire exposed the tongue to a diverse range of influences over time. The founding of New Dunryd on the eastern coast introduced the colony to trade routes from around the world. As a result, cultivating a sense of understanding with foreign visitors became essential to achieving mercantile success. From within the country's borders, the spread of the Aedyran tongue helped to solidify relations with Glanfathan tribes. Though Duc Admeth and his father never forced anyone to adopt the tongue during the Glanfathan conflicts, they encouraged prisoners of war to learn, and free lessons were available across rural communities during times of peace.



ELD AEDYRAN

This language of the Aedyran Empire is also found in Dyrwood and the Penitential Regency of Readceras. It uses most letters of the available alphabet, including the *y* notably absent from Glanfathan and Vailian. Accents are used to modify the duration of a vowel, but never to denote syllable stress or alter pronunciation—with the exception of the umlaut. Stress typically falls on the first syllable.

Eld Aedyran experienced its most dramatic changes when the Aedyr Kingdom joined with the elves of Kulklin. While many languages are the products of foreign invasion or occupation, Aedyran culture was more apt to shift speech and writing in order to accommodate contextual changes. To this day, scholars site Eld Aedyran as evidence of their passion for cultural expansion.

Common terms and phrases:

- eor vyla*: the fertile valley
- thy fulc vardent*: people far away
- unscayt warth*: a victorious battle

HYLSPEAK

Among other things, Dyrwood is known for its sprawling rural communities. Here isolation, community, and patriotism work in tandem to produce a people with close association to their heritage—some would say too close. As such, Hylspeak is eccentrically rooted in Eld Aedyran with a mixture of influences from recent history. Hylspeak is most widely used in folk songs and poems that trace their origins to ancient traditions. Archaic terms—that either shifted their meaning or fell out of use entirely—thrive in the classical tongue. Hylspeak and Aedyran have evolved away from each other to such a degree that countrymen from the city and a distant farm may completely fail to understand each other.

The resurgence of animancy imbued the language with a superstitious reputation. Many people with awakened souls find themselves quite spontaneously able to converse in Hylspeak with an alacrity that horrifies those around them. The possibility that Hylspeak itself is responsible for dredging latent soul essences to the surface of the mind caused some to inherently distrust it. With such a dubious standing, Hylspeak isn't welcomed in many communities, and faces the threat of falling out of use entirely.

Common terms and phrases:

- ih fith ascroiga*: a pint of whiskey
- hyl an printing*: my father's land
- hagh fis an fraigam*: the pigs are loose



VAILIAN

The Vailian tongue is distinct from others in structure and sound. While it shares the Aedyran masculine and feminine forms of nouns, adjective suffixes are uniquely used to add description or meaning to the same noun. Stress is always placed on the last syllable of a word, save when an accented vowel reorients pronunciation. Two words may appear exactly the same, but the presence of an accent

can dramatically shift their meaning. For these reasons, Vailian has the reputation as a language of subtlety. In the context of negotiations between Vailians and foreign dignitaries, it is common for both sides to part ways with contradictory notions of their success.

Vailia's long history lends many influences to the modern-day Aedyran tongue. The Dyrwoodan office of duc originated from the Vailian term for the ruler of a sovereign city-state.

Common terms and phrases:

corès: farewell (literally a contraction of "with

the gods")

vengiatta: vengeance

fentre: title for an unmarried man

GLANFATHAN

While the Glanfathan tongue varies between tribes, there is enough commonality that different speakers can understand the other with minimal challenge. In its written form, circumflex markings are used to call out longer vowels, and apostrophes serve contraction purposes rather than impact pronunciation.

Common terms and phrases:

dial: vengeance

adran aenem: a sacred place

has en êr: as the bird flies

deva sînwen: an evil spirit

an rawdha stil: to bloody one's sword







A dark, atmospheric illustration of a forest floor covered in glowing green mushrooms. The mushrooms are scattered across a dark, textured surface, their bright glow contrasting with the surrounding darkness. The background is a deep, dark blue, suggesting a night sky or a very dark forest.

CHAPTER 10
BESTIARY

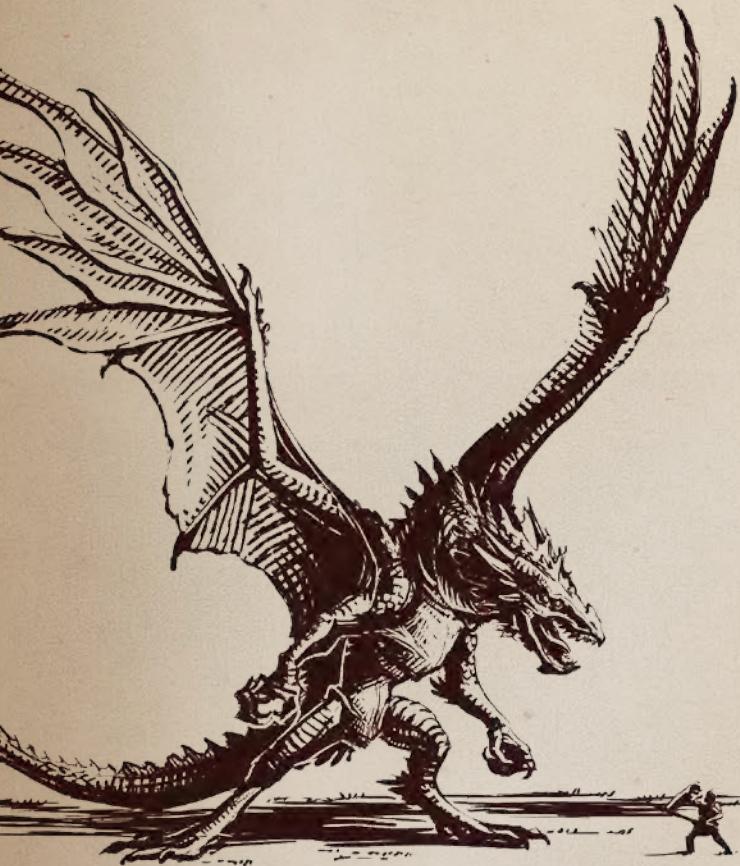


In addition to its civilized races and cultures, Eora is home to many strange creatures. Whether the product of a unique ecosystem or the vagaries of soul essence, these beings present a diverse array of challenges for the unsuspecting and unwary.

BEASTS

Dragon

A typical full-grown dragon is colossal, taller than most any building of mortal artifice when at rest. They can easily rise to twice



that height when rearing up onto their hind legs. While their individual appearances vary, most fully formed dragons boast a pair of expansive wings, a powerful serpentine body, clawed arms and legs, and a tail. The growth of horns and scales is normal, if variable in color or placement.

Like drakes, when dragons have reached the mature stage of their life cycle, they adapt

THE TYPICAL DRAGON IS HARDLY GREATER in size than a dog, and possesses only the intelligence of a base reptile. Much is said about their wrath, but in truth dragons have been known to slaughter each other competing for food before most hunting parties can arrive at their den to dispatch them.

It is natural for junior members of the Society to question the validity of this research. However, be assured: dragon lore is the backbone of our order, and it has never led us astray.

—On Dragons, the Society of the Talon

to fit within their environment, but even more extensively than a drake. Their coloration, ornamentation, and (to a limited degree) body structure reflect their chosen territory, as do some of their attacks and defenses. Because they have already claimed a territory, and rarely face threats from other dragons or drakes, they are more conservative in nature and will not seek unnecessary conflict.

Along the trajectory of the dragon life cycle, only mature dragons can mate. This is generally the only occasion that will cause a dragon to leave its lands or seek out others of its kind. Upon reaching the drake stage, these creatures will assume a sex. However, if surrounding populations are too heavily skewed one way or the other, individual dragons can change their sex. As creatures that reach this stage are so rare, this ability is critical to the survival of the species.

A dragon's body wears the scars of age and experience. On the rare occasion that a dragon is injured, it will carry a mark not soon forgotten. Since this period of adulthood represents the start of their reproductive cycle, dragons are fiercely protective and secretive around nondragon kind in order to guarantee their chances of finding a successful mate.

They are more intelligent than most other sentient beings, but their solitary nature prevents them from interacting meaningfully with others.

Drake

Drakes are the intermediary form between wurms and adult dragons. While wurms have only a base degree of intelligence, and dragons are often much wiser than humans, drakes are cunning on the equivalent level of primates. Their eyes and faces reflect uncanny intellect and the desire to learn.

In contrast to wurms, drakes have longer torsos with a broader chest. Their most prominent fangs are longer, as are the claws on their forelegs. Their other features tend to vary by subtype. During this period of a drake's life, they are starting the first stages of becoming "real" dragons. This means their colors start shifting, both overall and more strongly in patches. Some drakes have solid coats of scales, but others have multi-toned or even mottled coats. Because they are relatively young, their scales grow and heal fast, so they don't show much wear and tear (unlike dragons).

Variations in a drake's features often reflect their home climate. A drake from the swamp may be shades of green, brown, and black with yellow eyes, nictitating membranes, and a long, flat snout featuring raised nostrils. A drake that spends most of its time in the sky may be blue and white with scales that seem feather-like, a slender body, and wings that assist with sustained gliding. A drake living underground may have earth-tone scales, wide eyes, a compact body, small wings, and powerful forelegs with oversized claws. While all drakes can breathe fire, many also have developed limited alternative breath attacks—lightning, acid, steam, etc.

Drakes are developed from wurms, but have not reached (and may never reach) the dragon stage. They aggressively defend their territory and, when needed, seek to expand the reach of their habitat. A fierce survival instinct allows that drakes will defend their territory with hostile force, especially from their own kind.

Wurm

Young dragons begin as wurms, though most never develop beyond that stage. Wurms are



clever and sly, if not especially intelligent. To develop into a drake (and eventually a dragon), a worm must have ample space and resources (food). They will not develop if they live near drakes and dragons. They must seek out a habitat that has not already been claimed by a larger counterpart.

Since the chances of further development are low, most worms will band together in covens for survival. They are bold and highly aggressive—both in competition for food among other coven members, and claiming territory for further development.

Druid Spiritshift Forms

Druids believe that spirit essence is strongest and most harmonious when connected to the natural world. As most beings have souls

(or parts of souls) that have lived dozens or hundreds of lifetimes before, this link is expressed through their past lives spent in beast form. Learning and practicing spiritshift forms involves tapping into previous lives and experiencing the strengths and skills (if not the actual memories) of soul ancestors in the animal kingdom. Druids also believe that spiritshifting allows an individual to find greater balance and strengthen their essence by “aligning” with past lives. This practice avoids the trauma of a full Awakening, which druids see as unnatural and forced.

Accomplished druids may learn multiple spiritshift forms, believing that each form imparts a unique set of experiences to the practitioner, and more fully balances his or her essence. This practice is not without its pitfalls. Even druids of significant experience have faced the challenge of grappling with an imbalance of animal essences within themselves.

Adopting additional spiritshift forms is a deeply personal choice that many embrace. It is not uncommon for elders to cast judgment on a druid’s state of preparation before determining if the shift form is approved.

Ranger Animal Companions

Rangers often choose as companions creatures with whom they share a strong natural affinity. The process of soul bonding connects ranger and beast to such a degree that both entities share stamina, health, and eventually death. It is believed that rangers bind themselves to animals in which they were recently, or most vividly, incarnated. Once bonded, ranger and companion never part unless one dies of natural causes. In some cases, the feelings of loss in a ranger can be so great that it takes years before they form a new bond.

Evidence has suggested that the ranger/animal bond can even outlast death, which

THE OTHERS HAD GONE TO SLEEP. I snuffed the candle so my silhouette against the window would not betray me. Alone in my chamber, I crouched on all fours and concentrated. In my mind's eye, I pictured the stelgaer cat.

Ever since the patrol when that beast loped in my direction, I haven't been able to get it out of my head. Its piercing, yellow-rimmed eyes, the silence of its paws. The way it regarded me with the smallest sliver of . . . what? Hunger, or recognition? My better reason tells me the former, but my heart knows otherwise. All I know for certain is that it padded away, leaving me without a scratch.

Almost as soon as I placed my palms on the ground, I felt something quicken. Not an alien thing, but as if my very soul moved like water to fix itself to a different container. There was no pain—not even the discomfort my research led me to expect. It felt like shrugging into a favorite jacket.

By the time I collapsed in an exhausted heap, I could tell by the placement of the moon that the better part of the evening had passed. There were also deep gouges in the wood floor that weren't there before.

And I remembered. Like waking from a dream, my memories spent in the hazy, bestial mind of a stelgaer cat were already fading, but I knew several things at once: I had done this before. Many times. And each time, I came back with a little less of myself. No—I surrendered more of myself.

How do the masters know of this, and yet deny it themselves? We have the opportunity to become as close to nature as the gods. I know they will say there is no balance in my actions. By then I will be as a shadow, slinking through forests so deep that the brave will fear to tread it.

So I leave this entry behind as my goodbye, not my apology. You will never find me.

—Cautionary Tales, Chapter V:
Diary of the Lost Druid



may be a contributing factor to their shared mortality. The soul affinity between the two runs so deep that they are united in all but a shared body, and one could hardly abandon his or her mortal existence without the other following suit.

Spear Spider

Spear spiders are moderately larger in size than dwarves, but they are feared for their frightening speed and barbed front legs with which they attack (unlike other giant spiders). While



walking, they move deliberately, and can give the (false) impression of being slow. When they run, their legs move extremely rapidly, covering an enormous amount of ground in seconds. They attack by jabbing with their two front legs, which are covered in barbs, and they occasionally bite to deliver deadly venom. Their coloration is vivid, with bright colors against their dark gray bodies. Their forelegs are more colorful than their other legs (which are dominantly gray), allowing for easy identification once spotted. A spear spider's weakness is its fragility.

Due to spear spiders' unique method of attack, very brave (or very foolish) swordsmen

and women (particularly members of the Talons) have traditionally fought them for sparring practice. Today, this tradition is held only by the most rustic and rugged warriors-in-training. The spear spider is also known as one of the boldest arachnid hunters, as it tends to rely less on its webs and more on its barbed legs to capture prey. As a result, this species ventures further from its nest than most other spiders.

Stelgaer

Stelgaers are large, predatory cats. While juveniles are often solo hunters, mature stelgaers may band together in prides to defend territory, hunt prey, and care for young. These cats are aggressive and highly adaptive. Particular species may be found in a range of environments, from warmer forests to cold tundra. Settlements have pushed them out of most



TODAY I FOUND A KITTY AND NAMED HER Ireby. She is black and has eyes like silver coins. Mother won't let her sleep inside. She took one look at her paws and accused me of exploring the woods again. She never lets me have anything I want. Grandmother never let her have a kitty either, I'll bet.

Ever since, Ireby has been mewling outside my window. I fed her scraps of dinner that I hid in my pockets, but it only seems to make her louder and unhappier. Now kitty is very loud, and Mother says she will beat her if I can't make her stop.

Perhaps I shouldn't be so hard on Mother. We've both had a hard time of it since Father never came back from finding his fortune in the East. A kitty would make us both happy again. It's not as if the kitty has a home, or a mother to take care of her.

I haven't heard Ireby in several minutes. Perhaps she went to sleep. As I wrote this, I thought I saw a pair of glowing lights outside my window. Just firebugs. Large ones. They were gone a second later. First thing tomorrow, I will forgive Mother and be a very, very good girl. Perhaps then she'll let kitty sleep inside.

—Diary of Gisli Frailhein

of the areas surrounding Defiance Bay. As a result, they are more common in Eir Glanfath. Their status as a deadly predator makes them a noteworthy trophy among the Talons and followers of Galawain.

Beetle

Giant beetles range from not quite man sized to truly enormous, but even the smallest can strike a sufficiently intimidating form to frighten off most adventurers. The alarmingly large insects never fail to impress and terrify visitors, and reinforce the image of Dyrwood as a barely civilized backwater. The expansive wilderness in and around Dyrwood (and Eir Glanfath) gives beetles plenty of room to multiply. The most successful species of large beetle have evolved to not only camouflage themselves in the surrounding environment, but also to grow carapaces made out of common and hardy materials (e.g., wood, stone, adra). Glanfathan tribes have been known



to fashion crude shields and even weapons out of the limbs and shells of these beetles.

All appearances to the contrary, there is an underlying complexity to the common beetle. When they choose a material with which to develop their shell, they do so with a level of intention that borders on artistry. Wood beetles will often burrow intricate holes in their carapaces. They blow air through these makeshift panpipes, and play a ghostly music to attract mates. Stone beetles fashion rudimentary tusks and horns that have the advantage on their prey. The function of adra beetles is as of yet unknown, save that they are notoriously difficult to kill.

Primordials

Creatures lacking in evident intelligence higher than that of basic plant life are dubbed as "primordial." They are characterized by a dogged will to survive, which lends them an astounding range of adaptability. Most primordials originate in swamps, forests, sewers, and any other locale hosting an abundance of biomatter. Over their life

cycle, most can develop to sustain themselves in almost any environment.

Primordials boasting above-average longevity (e.g., delemgan) are credited with intelligence surpassing that of their peers. This is due to their extensive experience and intimate connection to the spirit world.

Black Ooze

These creatures appear to have no discernible anatomy. They are nothing more than animated pools of viscous goo.

Oozes are mobile, carnivorous molds that develop in dark, dank places that experience little to no regular traffic. Oozes feed off of ambient bacteria, fungi, and small insects as they grow. Once they reach the size of an average dog, they begin to seek out larger prey, including humans.

Like all living creatures, they have essence, but their lack of intelligence and a true nervous system makes them aggressive and difficult to deter. Their viscosity and mobility enable them to perform surprisingly nimble attacks, and they are capable of "spitting" corrosive enzymes to break down flesh and armor. Some of the more dangerous variants are disease vectors, making any confrontation with them especially perilous.

The only known ooze to make a name for itself was a figure of folklore known as "Backalley Midden." It evolved from a garbage heap behind a Defiance Bay brothel, and preyed on unsuspecting streetwalkers and their clients. Backalley Midden turned into something of a local legend. Rumor told that it was a Glanfathan elder in a past life (or had absorbed the soul essence of one), that it sang to the full moon and grew to such a size that it camouflaged itself as a man wearing a wide-brimmed cap and black duster. No one took the speculation seriously until a city guardsman was found half-dissolved next to a storm drain. Dunryd Row supposedly apprehended Backalley Midden, but questions about the truth of it quickly faded from public attention along with the stories.



Dank Spore

These giant mushrooms stand taller than aumaua and have dozens of roots surrounding their base.

Dank spores are unique compared to other forms of fungi due to their affinity for rot, decay, and also the souls of living creatures. They often creep in groups along the forest floor, searching for weakened or exhausted travelers who are unable to fight back. Once they find a host, they bind to it and supply it with basic nutrients to keep it alive while they absorb its essence. Dank spores are extremely hostile once they find a host, and will attack anything that gets close to their meal with their poisonous, barbed roots.

Dank spores feed on the most corrupt and rotten energy of a soul first, continuing until the host is nothing but a soulless husk. This makes dank-spore flesh useful to experienced apothecaries as a cleansing agent in soul-purification medicines and techniques. Improperly applied, however, this treatment can lead to amnesia and, in extreme cases, soul fracturing.



Sporeling

Sporelings are the small, humanoid, and juvenile form of dank spores. While more mobile and agile than their mature counterparts, they are also weaker. They spawn from dank spores and use their heightened mobility to seek

prey and gain strength. Like dank spores, they feed off of both decaying organic matter and essence, and they must bulk up on a sufficient amount of both before maturing into dank spores themselves.

Deleman ("Leaf-Born")

These are forest spirits of Eir Glanfath that are bound into ancient (often petrified) trees or adra monuments. They appear to have mostly elf-shaped bodies, but their skin is made of wood and their hair is long and plantlike (adragans appear to have skin made of adra). They glow slightly and have tiny motes of light (like dust caught in a sunbeam) around them. They do not wear clothes, but they are not "anatomically correct," as they only have the overall shape of humanoids. Deleman are entirely magical beings and do not use physical weapons to attack. Their attractiveness is used in tandem with their



charm magic, typically to stop attackers or lure them to their deaths.

These creatures draw their essence from their environments. While they have physical bodies and can be killed if those bodies are destroyed, their survival also depends on the health of their environment. They feel no natural animosity toward other beings, but they will defend their territories fiercely. Thus, delemgan and adragan ("adra-born") individually may be more or less hostile depending on the well-being of their locale, and on whether other explorers or adventurers have, in the past, proved dangerous or benign. They are a natural roadblock to large-scale development. While rural tribes in Eir Glanfath often live peacefully alongside them, expanding or developing cities and towns may find themselves beset with hostile delemgan. Some oppose the destruction of delemgan habitats. City dwellers generally support the notion, believing that their souls will simply reincarnate in other forests or back into folk.

Delemgan are traditionally friendly toward rangers and druids. Their spiritual link with trees has led to greater understanding of the link between rangers and their animal companions, though a definitive connection has yet to be made.

Pwḡra

A delempwḡra ("rotten leaf"), more typically called pwgra ("rotten"), is a delemgan gone bad, usually as a result of the corruption of their home tree or adra stone. They are as ugly as delemgan are beautiful, spindly and emaciated with cool tones to their skin. Their hair is dead, dark, and slimy, and their facial features contorted, their teeth long and sharp. Unlike delemgan, they are not surrounded by motes of light, and they are more than willing to attack with their long talons. Pwḡra decorate themselves with the skulls, skins, and feathers of animals they've killed.

While delemgan may be peaceful, pwgra never are. Just as delemgan seek to maintain the health of their forests, pwgra seek to corrupt them, making the two species mortal enemies. The rot that infects them endows them with poison attacks, but it also makes their bodies weak and brittle, leaving them vulnerable to piercing and crushing attacks.

Since they can no longer draw essence from a healthy forest, they must survive by sucking plants, animals, and folk dry of all energy and essence. This makes them natural allies with shadows, which feed by similar means.

They are hostile toward all life, but rangers and druids are their favored foes.

Lurker

Lurkers are actually colonies of several different species of parasitic, carnivorous plants and fungi working together to hunt common prey. As a whole, they stand nearly ten feet tall in a "body" formed of vines, leaves, roots, and earth in a vaguely anthropomorphic shape. The coexistence of so many separate organisms can make them hard to kill, and it is usually best to sever the parts that enable locomotion or to light the entire colony on fire.



While the creation of a lurker is a bit of a mystery, some speculate that they form when certain species of flesh-eating plants join together on a common host, such as a soulless victim of dank spores, and become



strong enough to achieve animation. This theory is supported by the fact that most swamp and forest lurkers, when cut open, contain bones and other remains riddled with roots and spores.

Lurkers are notorious for hiding in plain sight, often remaining motionless and waiting among the trees and underbrush to ambush their prey. They are sophisticated enough to store food; it's not uncommon to see several unconscious victims tangled in a lurker's vines, being saved for a later feeding.

SPIRITS

Modern understanding of the spiritual realm is largely thanks to those denizens who—for a multitude of reasons—remain tethered to the mortal half of existence. Unfortunately, their association with the living is often a source of terror. Many of the incorporeal dead are as numb and unreasoning as forces of nature, while others greedily covet the souls of the living. The spiritual essences across Eora are ever-present reminders that death is a fragile balance, with no guarantees of comfort or closure.

Blight

These amorphous clouds rapidly swirl with violent energy. Within the maelstrom, dozens of humanoid shapes materialize and vanish within an instant. Faces scream in silent agony while hands desperately clutch and claw at the air around the mass.

Biāwacs (spirit winds; *see* Souls and Reincarnation) often create blights. If souls are ripped free of bodies and caught in the center of the storm, they may become stuck together and bonded with any other elemental substances in the maelstrom. They are pure chaos and confusion, and destroying them is a mercy to the souls trapped within.

Experimenting with blight creations is yet another questionable activity that has earned animancers a bad reputation in many circles. Some see it as dangerous and inhumane; others as a means to an end. Some also fear that unethical animancers create blights, never mind how difficult this would be.

Cean Ḡwla

Like phantoms, these are violent and confused spirits that have not moved on. Specifically, these are the spirits of women who die under particularly tragic or traumatic circumstances, hence the name *cean gw̄la*, which translates to "blood mother." The popular image of the cean gw̄la as the spirit of a jilted lover has changed in recent years as the effects of Waidwen's Legacy have become better known. Now,

with so many Hollowborn and a steep rise in cean gw  sightings, many tie these spirits to mothers who have died in childbirth, particularly in giving birth to Hollowborn.

These spirits can also come from the insane, women who perished in a violent crime or accident, or women who led particularly violent lives.

Phantom

Phantoms are souls that did not properly separate from the body after death. This usually happens as a result of severe trauma, particularly in the case of a violent death. Unlike lost souls, which are incapable of interacting with or being detected by normal mortals, phantoms (like shadows and cean gw ) maintain a connection to the physical world. They will attack other life forms without discrimination.

Phantoms can also come from people who lived particularly chaotic lives, including violent criminals and the insane. Anyone can become a phantom under the right circumstances. The fear of phantoms—and their association with the mentally ill—results in shunning across many communities.

Shadow

Shadows are created when creatures with heavily fractured souls die without reentering the cycle of rebirth. Because these souls are damaged, they drain essence from other creatures in a futile attempt to repair themselves. The more essence they steal, the more powerful and dangerous they become. As they suck up essence, they pick up bits of corporeal matter, giving them a visible, if indistinct, form. Luckily, shadows can only draw a small bit of spiritual energy from souls still attached to a body or bound to an object. They mainly rely on creatures like the pw ra, who can draw souls out of their physical form, to help them obtain the essence they crave.

Shadows have been known to draw spiritual energy from people while they sleep, when their souls are not bound as strongly to their bodies. This usually results in horrible nightmares that leave the person in an exhausted



state the next day. If an entire town shares nightmares, it's highly probable that a strong shadow has taken up residence there.

Since shadows absorb spiritual energy, they are difficult to detect for creatures who rely on spiritual sight. This has led to experiments in binding shadows to armor or other objects to act as a cloak to obscure those who do not wish to be seen by such creatures.

Will-o-Wisp

City folk who never see will-o-wisps often think of them as the lost souls of children meandering to their next lives. Rural types who regularly encounter them find this hilarious. Wisps inhabit abandoned ruins and other forgotten places, and they're known to be curious, sometimes following adventurers and other visitors. While they may peacefully patrol their chosen haunts, they become extremely aggressive and territorial if provoked (or if they perceive a threat to their habitat). They are known as the weeds of the spirit world—small, quick to regenerate, and bothersome in large numbers.



Like deleman, they have a friendly disposition toward rangers and druids.

Vessels

When it comes to states of nonliving, it is important to distinguish between types. A construct is a framework of (often artificial) humanoid parts housing an operational soul. The souls in question can be fully conscious or merely reflexive, but they share a common goal: to willingly take on a specified form and carry out an objective (e.g., the protection of a tomb). Employing constructs is a time-honored, if morbid, tradition.

Necromancy is the ancient Ixamitl process used to bind a soul to its body. Although history has shown this process is typically done to an unwilling subject, it has been bestowed on the willing, or even self-imposed, more often than one might think.

The souls of the “undead” are not bound to anything as elegant or resourceful as a construct. Their bodies rely on living tissue and soul energy to maintain their grim existence. Depending on their state of

preservation, the undead exhibit characteristics that will change over the span of their degenerating “life cycle.”

A living body naturally contains the entirety of a soul. As long as the body is functioning, the entire soul tends to gravitate to this body. However, a soul trapped within an imperfect vessel, such as a dead or dying one, tends to weaken over time. This weakening accelerates the decay of the body quite rapidly.

An undead creature can avoid most of this decay by fortifying its dwindling soul. The simplest way to do this is to ingest material rich with soul energy. The flesh and blood of the living tend to be the most readily available, but other materials (such as adra) are possible substitutes. Other means of magically fortifying one’s soul are feasible through the use of animancy. This typically involves magically siphoning portions (or the entirety) of the soul from another living being. It is important to note that while decay can be delayed, it can never be reversed.

Once the undead creature has fortified its soul, it must nourish its body. Although the body is not naturally alive, it requires basic sustenance to avoid additional decay. Consuming the flesh and blood of living creatures (while the creatures yet live) tends to solve both survival dilemmas undead creatures face.

Animat

Historians theorize that animats served as protectors for royal tombs. Their creators bound the souls of the strongest guardians and servants to intricate sculptures made of various materials based on the rank of the soul captured within. All knowledge of their construction stems from the animats found in Glanfathan ruins, and much about their artifice is still only the topic of speculation. Animancers were slow to pick up the secrets of animat creation, as studying these ancient behemoths often proved fatal. However, as the technique

for this process became better understood, powerful animancers started creating their own animats to serve as personal guardians, using whatever weapons and materials they could manage to collect and melt down.

Animats can only be created using loyal, trustworthy souls that hold no doubt about those they must protect. While the ritual to create them can still be performed without that complete trust, too much doubt in a participant's soul can result in abominations that end up trying to rip their own bodies apart as violently as possible, causing extreme collateral damage in the process. Imperfect animats beset by a small amount of doubt will still obey most commands and reliably function as guardians. If they are reminded of their doubts, they can turn on their creators. Knowing about an animat's doubts can be a great advantage in combat, and most animat creators keep such doubts a closely held secret to prevent their creations from becoming reckless killing machines.



UNDEAD

Fampyr

Fampyrs have had their lives unnaturally extended through necromancy. Though they retain most of a normal humanoid appearance, they are merely a few missed meals away from devolving into mindless monstrosities, and they know it. As fampyrs maintain individual personalities and memories, this morbid knowledge may manifest itself in a number of ways. Some may become reclusive and cautious, avoiding any threats that could prematurely weaken or destroy them, and others become outgoing hedonists, seeking to enjoy every pleasure the world has to offer while they can.

Sooner or later, every fampyr (unless killed) will end up as a skeleton. Though famps exist on the higher echelon of what passes for an undead hierarchy, devolution remains an inescapable reality of their "life" cycle.

Because fampyrs require the flesh of the living, they are shunned by most civilized communities. As a result, fampyrs tend to live at the fringes of society, in secret, and they generally avoid daylight for fear of being recognized and attacked. However, fampyrs—particularly older individuals who have learned to accumulate and wield additional essence—hold a certain mystique for the living. There are people who, whether fascinated by these dangerous and exotic creatures or the ancient (and new) processes used to create them, enjoy their society and may agree to provide living flesh. Some will provide their own essence, while others will offer up that of an unknowing victim.

Dargul

Darguls have reached the first irreversible step in their decay. At this stage, they have lost some of their memories and mental abilities, but they know enough to recognize their decline. They are too far gone to pass as the living. A stench of rot pervades the air around them, and their discolored skin reveals the truth of their nature to anyone paying attention.

Unsat hunger and awareness of their decay make them more reckless and aggressive than fampyrs. Some fampyrs dread this stage even more than later stages, knowing that they



will retain enough of their faculties to fully experience it.

Despite their aggression, they seek out secret and secluded environments to avoid attracting the attention and wrath of civilized communities.

Gul

Most hold that guls retain enough mental understanding to be canny hunters and adversaries, but not enough to care about the advanced degradation of their once-living bodies. Like darguls, they seek secluded environments, though some also gravitate toward cemeteries for the consumable flesh available there.

Consuming flesh feeds their hunger for physical nourishment, but it falls short of satisfying their need for essence. Inhabiting a graveyard may actually hasten their decay, since it satisfies a part of their hunger and reduces their incentive to find living sources of food.

Revenant

These undead have devolved beyond even the relative intelligence of a gul. Revenants main-



tain their instinctive hunger, but they don't have the will or intelligence to reliably satisfy it. They are drawn to any environment where dead or weakened bodies can be found.

Skeleton

Skeletons no longer require flesh or essence, but their drive to kill has been instilled over many stages of progressive decay. As a result, they will attack anything, but they won't attempt to consume it. The essence that animates them is energy at its most basic level, having slowly lost any vestige of will, intelligence, or personality. If not killed, a skeleton may eventually grind itself into bone dust, or its essence may finally evaporate into the ether.

Skeletal savants are created from warriors, wizards, and other adventurous types. They are similar in overall properties to other skeletons, but they are more capable in combat, and may retain basic abilities from their adventuring lives.

Death Guard

An anomaly among creatures still possessing bodies that might be called “undead,” death guards are a naturally occurring phenomenon, both rare and poorly understood, in which someone becomes so fanatical in a particular devotion that even upon death, their spirit clings to its body, ultimately reanimating it solely through a boundless desire to see their cause fulfilled. As such, frequently death guards seem to arise from situations in which a given personal crusade fell just short of fruition.

Perhaps owing to the obsessive, unbending zeal common to all death guards, or perhaps due to the perverse perspective such a being gains upon transcending mortality, death guards are in most cases unstable and depraved—the most extreme and unyielding versions of themselves in life—and in death they tend to command tremendous power, seemingly by a similar mechanism to that of paladins, whose prowess is proportionate to their devotion.

Flesh Construct

Flesh constructs are made from pieces of human bodies that are bound together using bronze, brass, or copper joints. Flesh constructs are predominantly powered by soul energy, so they essentially have an energy system that powers their muscles, brain, etc., without using blood and oxygen. They may be desiccated or even skinless.

Like an animat, a flesh construct is created by animancers and powered by a captive soul. Unlike an animat, it is not dependent on the will and loyalty of the bound soul. Flesh constructs, therefore, cannot be undone by self-doubt, but they are only capable of following simple instructions. They also tend to be shorter lived than animats. Whereas

the energy and loyalty in an animat’s soul can sustain it for decades, even centuries, the soul bound to a flesh construct will gradually fade away from the physical form, and the body will stop responding to the soul’s energy. Opponents of animancy in general, and soul constructs in particular, see this as a soul’s rejection of an improper body, and as evidence that flesh constructs are an abomination.

The creation of flesh constructs is controversial even among animancers. Some see the process as “soul lobotomy,” and believe that a soul should be allowed to pass on to the next life rather than be used to unthinkingly fuel a body.



Wicht

At the beginning of Waidwen's Legacy, people by the thousands sought the help of animancers. Untold numbers of children were born without souls and subsequently died in infancy. Putting a lost soul into a body was out of the question (for most), since almost all efforts resulted in an immediate Awakening of the transplanted soul. The spirit of a recently deceased stranger would overtake the personality of its host body.

Animancers came up with a temporary solution, though many were wary of using it: if an

developed faint personalities, though most of their interactions with others were markedly stunted and "weird." When the children reached adolescence, many of them started to physically change, but not in the way that a pubescent child of their species should. Instead, they started to turn into wichts.

Wichts appear to be boys and girls between nine and eleven years of age, with pale skin and purple undertones. Their eyes are a deep purple and glow with a white, internal light. Their hair can be any color, but it is always stringy, dirty, and falling out in clumps. Their fingers are unnaturally long, ending in bony talons. Their teeth are similarly jagged and inhumanly large, surrounded by dark gums. A purple-tinted white light emanates from within their mouths whenever they open their jaws to full width. Though they wear clothing, the items are typically little more than rags. They also run barefoot, their toes misshapen, long, and ending in talons.

During the early days of what came to be known as the "Cruel Salvation," wichts were spotted at night prowling along roads between settlements. Charitable passersby seeking to help what at first seemed beleaguered orphans only realized the depth of their error when it was too late.

WILDERS

Where does civilized meet savage? Some would say in the wilder. Such creatures are classified as possessing above-average to extraordinary degrees of intelligence and a unique form of organized society. Some are developed enough to show a keen understanding of their ancestral traditions (e.g., dance, song, story, etc.). These displays are often misinterpreted by the uninformed.

In spite of their apparent complexities, wilder creatures exhibit no inclination toward joining civilization as a whole, and keep to themselves to the point of lashing out with terrifying aggression when confronted by an outsider.



animal soul were put into a soulless child's body, the child would have awareness, instinct, and volition. The animancers also believed that because animal souls have less individual personality and memory than human souls, the children would be able to develop into "normal" people given enough time.

The children did gain awareness, instinct, and volition. This allowed many more of them to survive through infancy. They also

Ogre

Ogres stand between ten and twelve feet tall. They are heavily muscled and typically attired in the furs, or skins, of their prey. They use crude weapons found, or created, in the wild. Clubs, axes, and maces of bone or wood are the norm. Most have unkempt hair that ranges from black to rust. Ogres have thick skin which ranges from pale (in colder climates) to a dark bronze.

Ogres are as intelligent (often more so) than "civilized" races, but their overwhelming hostility toward everyone (including each other) keeps their numbers low. Ogres prefer to live alone, except during mating season, which does almost as much to reduce their numbers as it does to replenish them.

Despite their natural intelligence, their volatile temperaments have historically prevented them from concentrating long enough to create

A notorious ogre matron dubbed Greya Hafstadt ("white-iron witch") purportedly discovered the secrets of forging Durgan steel. Mercenaries and militia traveled from all corners of the nation, tasked with tracking Greya to her lair, learning her knowledge, and killing her before the competition could do the same. The stories of Greya conflict in their outcome: some claim that she was killed before passing on the secret, while others say she vanished with her tribe down the gullet of a vast cave system. No one knows for certain, but the latter would explain the rare sighting of particularly well-armed ogres.

Skuldr

Skuldrs dwell in caves in total or near-total darkness. As a result, they have poor vision and rely on their sense of hearing to navigate and find prey. The protrusions and hairs on



anything of significant cultural value. Most live seminomadic, secluded lives in the wilderness, where they are less likely to encounter others. Ogres with a more "peaceful" streak take particular pains to avoid contact.

On the rare occasions that ogres are found working together, they are almost always operating under the direction of an ogre matron. Ogre matrons are even larger than male ogres, but tend to be less aggressive.



their ears allow them to detect airflow, which is key to pinpointing direction in an underground environment.

They communicate through screeches and clicks, and they also use these vocalizations in a sort of echolocation. They are communal, and will nest and raise young together.



Troll

These gangly giants stand twice the height of average humans. Their bodies are covered in large, fungal growths which leak foul-smelling, pus-like fluid. Their oversized hands and feet extend to giant claws capable of rending a man in two. Dozens of slimy tendrils hang loosely from atop their oversized heads, and their vast maws are filled with jagged, razor-sharp teeth. Trolls have long faces, long chins, long noses,

and tangled masses of wiry, fungus-infected hair on the tops of their heads. They never use weapons, and don't even wear hides.

Looking at a troll, it can be difficult to tell whether they've evolved in harmony with lichen, moss, and fungi, or whether they've been overtaken by them. A troll's naturally clammy flesh provides the ideal growing environment for these plants. They provide camouflage as well as some protection from the elements, and the enzymes they produce also offer limited sustenance for trolls in lean times.

Because of their symbiosis with these plants, trolls generally dwell in heavily wooded areas, although some may occasionally be seen in damp underground environments that also house an abundance of lichens and fungi.

Vithrack

The vithrack are extremely rare, very dangerous creatures with natural cipher abilities. They are mostly humanoid in shape, slightly taller and



thinner than humans, but with horrific, fanged, spider-like heads. Similarly to spiders, they are capable of spinning silk. Instead of webs, they use this skill to fashion their own very intricate and fine robes. Males and females are indistinguishable from each other. They are primarily spell casters and mental manipulators, like ciphers, though they will also attack with their fangs when forced into melee combat. Despite their extreme intelligence and power, vithrack are not a major force in the world due to their extremely low birth rates.

Given their arachnid appearance, it's no surprise that vithrack have traditionally used spiders as companions and minions. Though they are highly intelligent and socially organized, little is known about their culture, as they are rarely encountered and hostile to outsiders.

Vithrack psionic powers allow them to communicate mentally with one another. Like many social insectoids, their society includes a variety of specific roles, including scouts and defenders. While their low birth rates are likely responsible for their hostility toward other races, they have also made the vithrack highly altruistic when it comes to their own kind. They will defend their nests to the death.

Xaurip

These hairless humanoids are about the size of orlans. They have elongated snouts and snake-like eyes, giving them a reptilian appearance. Their legs end in three-toed feet, while their elongated arms end in three-fingered claws.

Xaurips adorn themselves with the bones of fallen enemies—mostly xaurips from rival tribes. They also have an affinity for large feathers, which they pin to their attire. Skin tones can vary from light green to a rustic brown. Their elongated snouts (which make speech impossible) and overly aggressive behavior have hindered them from communicating with the more civilized races of the world. They live in secluded, tribal territories and are known for ruthlessly attacking those foolish enough to cross their path.

Xaurips revere dragons as deities and build their communities around the lairs of these powerful creatures. It is not uncommon for a small tribe to wander until it has found a worm to worship. Once a tribe dedicates itself to a dragon, they will defend it at all costs. Elaborate rituals, in which the dragon consumes xaurip sacrifices, are normal. As a dragon grows in age and size, these sacrifices become large religious events that cost the lives of hundreds of xaurips. The power and prestige of a xaurip tribe directly correlates with the age of its dragon. The most powerful tribes have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Warriors and shamans of these large tribes typically paint their bodies to resemble their draconic overlord.





THE WHEEL OF BERATH SPINS endlessly, passing the souls of the vanquished through pillars of adra, the veins of the world, and giving them new life when they emerge again. With every journey's completion, another unfurls. With every danger averted, a new calamity looms. This is the world of Eora, where all life begins and ends at the Pillars of Eternity.



Pillars of Eternity Guidebook Volume One paints in vivid detail the gods, monsters, cultures, factions, places, and histories of Pillars of Eternity—a definitive guide covering everything you need to know about this rich new setting, assembled by the acclaimed storytellers of Obsidian Entertainment.



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